

THE GREATEST PORK SANDWICH IN AMERICA page 22

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summer

## MAKE THIS BREAD

From baguettes to rustic sourdoughs, learn how to bake artisan breads like a pro. Plus, the country's top 20 loaves, and more

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### Discover Corsica

The island's cuisine is a food lover's dream

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Four-Hour  
Baguette  
See page  
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recipe

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*chanterelle*



*bluefoot*



*white beech*

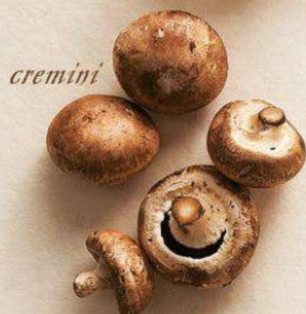


*bear's head*

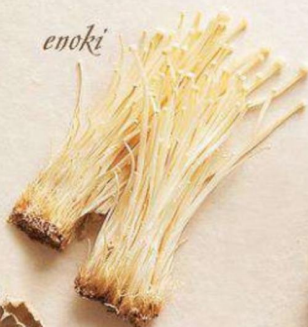


*shiitake*

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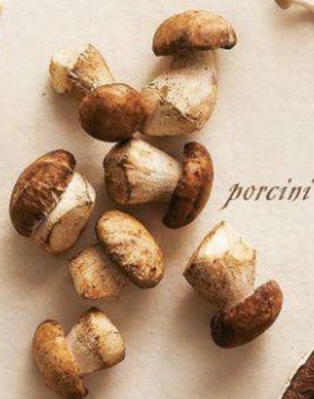
*cremini*



*enoki*



*brown beech*



*porcini*



*oyster*



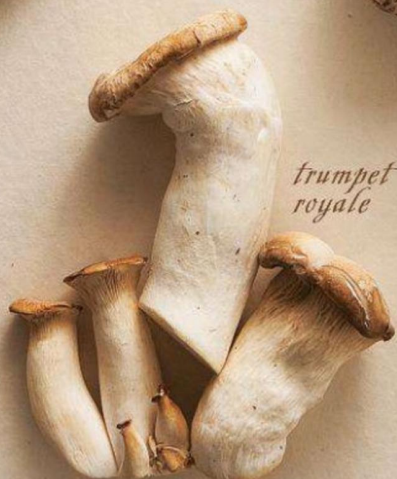
*nameko*



*portobello*



*morels*



*trumpet royale*



*hen of the woods*



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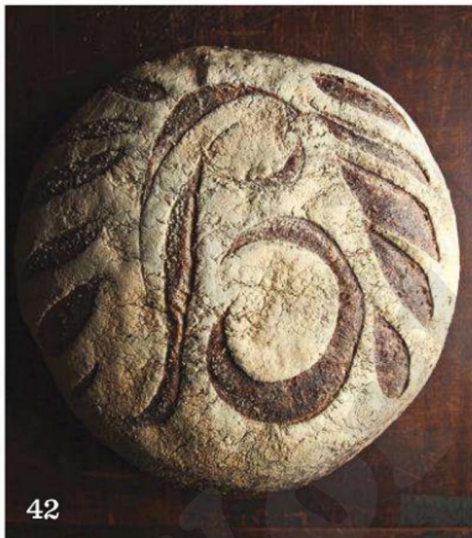
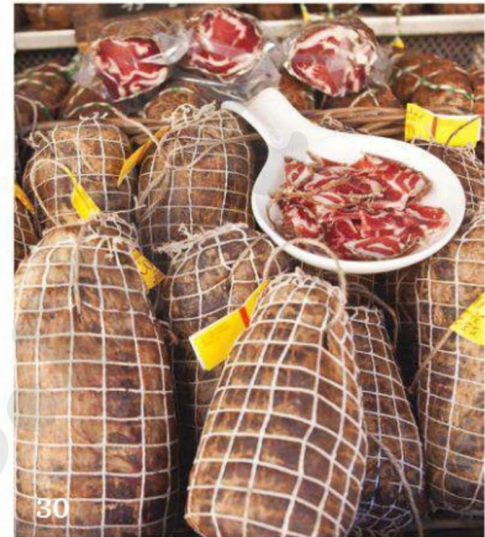
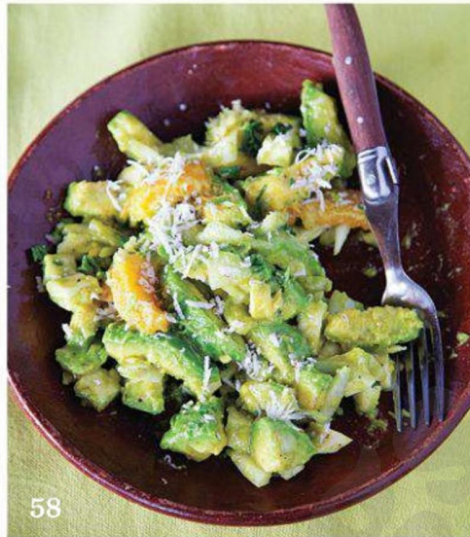
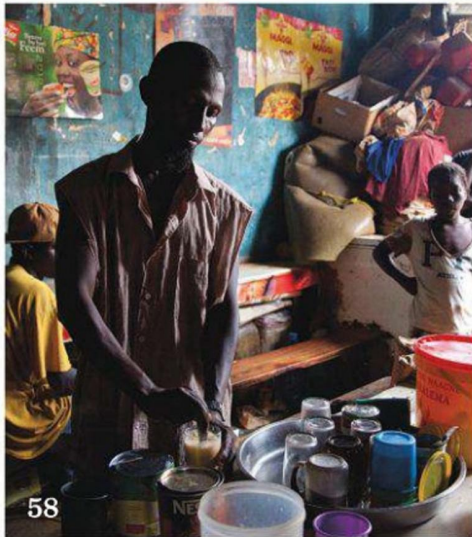
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On the mountainous Mediterranean island of Corsica, native ingredients merge with the flavors of France and Italy in irresistible rustic dishes, from luscious cannelloni and tender cheese dumplings called *strozzapreti*, to supple cured meats and fresh, handmade cheeses. *By David McAninch*

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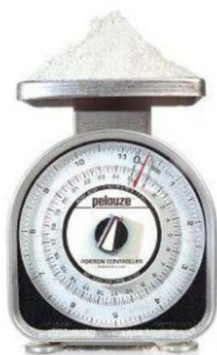
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Cover Four-Hour Baguette PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COLEMAN

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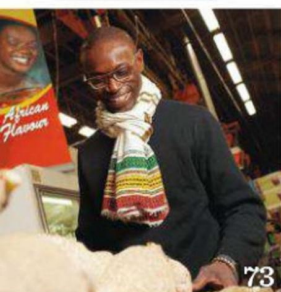
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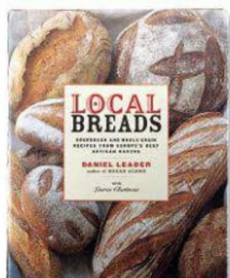
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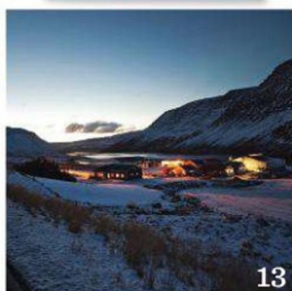
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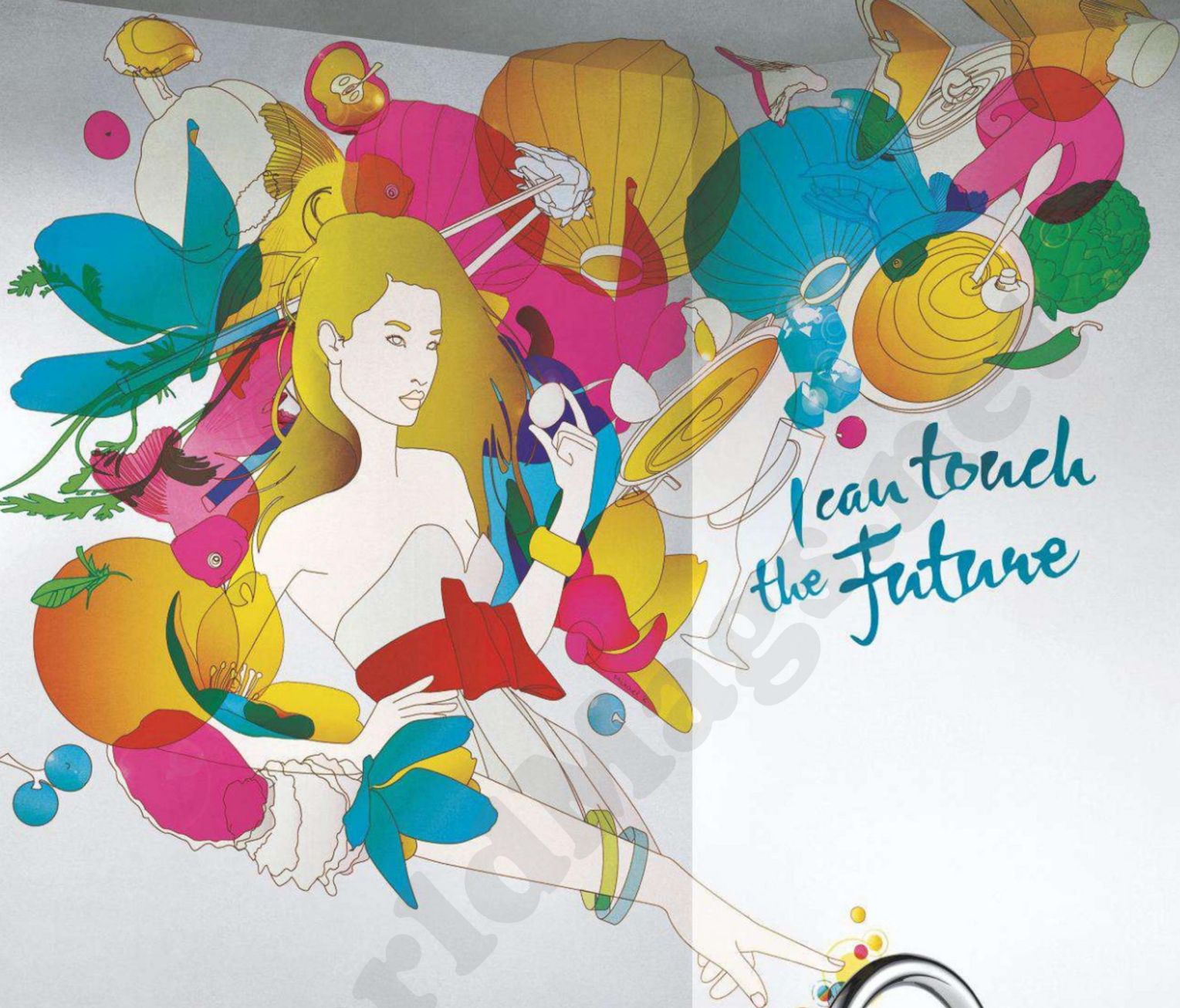
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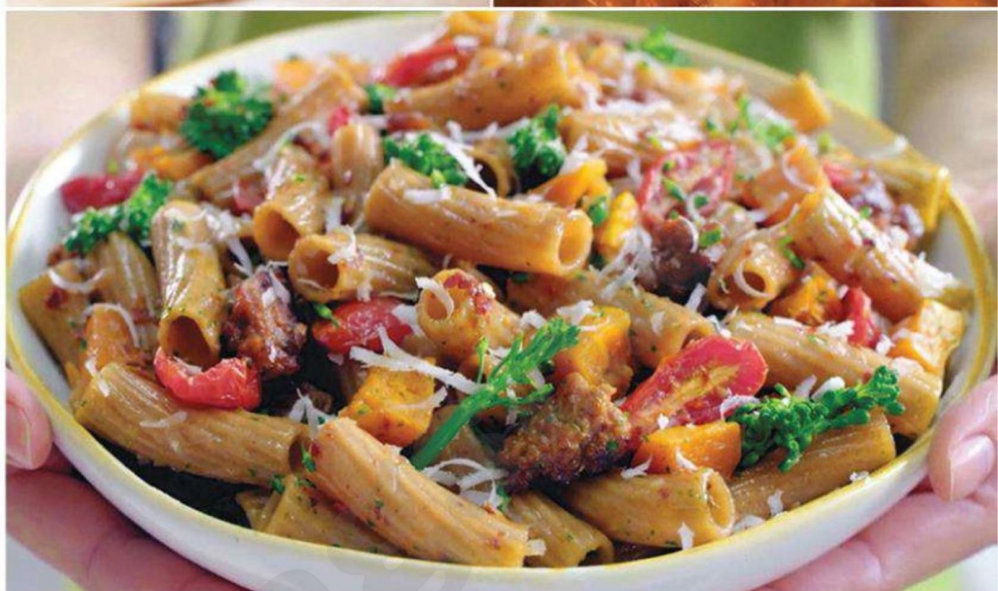
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## FIRST



# Our Daily Bread

Thank heaven for bakers

**I**F THERE'S ONE THING I learned while working on the "American Bread" story, which begins on page 42, it's that bakers are a truly a unique breed. To most of us, they seem like magicians, turning the simplest ingredients into insanely delicious loaves. They're obsessive: To make good bread—exceptionally good bread, the kind you bite into and thank the high heavens for—every detail has to be considered and reconsidered. And no doubt, they're mavericks in the extreme sense of the word: Of the hundreds of loaves from around the country that we tasted at the SAVEUR offices over the course of a few weeks, no two were even remotely alike. As I marveled over those loaves, some studded with fruit or nuts or olives, others encrusted with seeds or a fantastically smoky char, I came to think of them as the embodiment of the bakers themselves: the expression of their individual artistry and ideas.

But the main thing I learned while working on this issue is that people who bake bread are generous. They go to work in the

wee hours of the morning so that we can wake up and have our baguettes, our raisin loaves, our rye ficelles. They do it all behind the scenes, knowing full well that most of the world hasn't a clue about the intricacies of what they do. And they share what they know, happily, writing books and training apprentices in order to spread the gospel of good bread.

Long before we started on this issue, I asked Daniel Leader (of Bread Alone bakery in upstate New York), who gave us his favorite bread recipes, and William Alexander, who chronicled his yearlong quest to become a skilled hobbyist baker (page 44), if they believed home cooks could make on a weekend afternoon the kind of artisan bread we swoon over. They both answered with an emphatic "Yes," and then went on to teach us how. To me, someone who knew little about yeasts and sourdoughs, it was an empowering education: after I baked my first loaf with fresh flour from Wild Hive Farm, a mill near my home in New York's Hudson Valley, I couldn't wait to do it again. That loaf was a real revelation, not only that breads baked at home could be this good, but that within me—within us all—is the soul of a baker.

—DANA BOWEN, Executive Editor

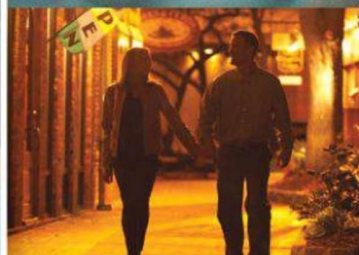
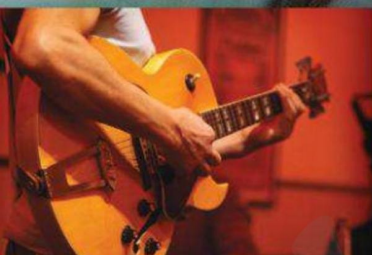
Fougasse, pain au levain, and a raisin-pecan loaf from Standard Baking Company in Portland, Maine.



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# FARE

Musings and Marvels From the World of Food, Plus Agenda and More

## Smoky and Sweet

Thailand's most fascinating dessert ingredient is incense

**R**ECENTLY AT SPOT DESSERT Bar in Manhattan's East Village, I ate a slice of cake unlike any I'd had before: It was a coconut cheesecake with a thick whipped cream topping, and it looked typical enough. But it was perfumed with musky, flowery aromas and flavored with notes of caramel and smoke. It turns out that Spot's consulting chef, Ian Chalermkittichai, uses a technique from his native Thailand to infuse the cake's cream cheese base with this heady mix of scents and tastes.

The method employs *tian op*, a horseshoe-shaped, beeswax-

coated wick suffused with aromatics: piney frankincense, flowery ylang-ylang, mossy patchouli, and spicy mace. The material is lit at both ends, then placed in a dish inside a bowl, jar, or saucepan with the food to be smoked. Then the vessel is covered, smothering the wicks, which smoke profusely, infusing the food with their complex fragrance.

*Tian op* may have traveled along the spice route from Arabia,

Ian Chalermkittichai smokes cream cheese with a Thai incense candle.



## AGENDA

May 2012

May

1

### VAPPU

(May Day)

Helsinki, Finland

On May Day, Helsinki's Kaivopuisto Park swells with picnickers feasting on traditional foods. Nearly 70,000 celebrants spread their blankets and lay out meals of beef and pork sausages, potato salad, Baltic herring, and *tippaleipä*, coils of fried dough dusted with powdered sugar. The drink of choice is *sima*, a lemon-infused mead seasoned with raisins. Info: [visithelsinki.fi](http://visithelsinki.fi)

May

5-20

### SAGRA DEL BORLENGO

Guiglia, Italy

In 1266, the troops at Montevallaro Castle, in the northern town of Guiglia, fell under siege by marauding Guelphs, a faction in medieval Italy's civil war. According to legend, as the defenders' provisions became thinner, so did their



focaccia. Thus war gave birth to the *borlengo*, a crêpe-like flatbread typically folded over a dollop of *cunza* (a mixture of lard,

rosemary, garlic, Parmesan, and sometimes pancetta or sausage), creased into quarters, and eaten. Visitors make *borlenghi*, attend art shows, and listen to live music, all the while sipping the local *lambrusco*. Info: [prolocoguiglia.it](http://prolocoguiglia.it)

May

6

Birthday

### DANIEL FRANK GERBER JR.

1898, Fremont, Michigan

In 1928, at the urging of his wife, who knew the difficulty of hand-straining vegetables for their infant daughter, Frank Gerber Jr., of Fremont, Michigan, suggested a new product line for Fremont Canning Company, where he worked as an assistant general



manager. A year later, the company's strained peas, prunes, carrots, spinach, and beef-vegetable soup hit grocery shelves and met with immediate success. In the 1940s, when the company shifted focus solely to baby food, Daniel Gerber was memorialized with its new name: Gerber Products Company.

May

12

### WINDSOR ZUCCHINI FESTIVAL

Windsor, Florida

Windsor, in northern Florida, was once a major zucchini producer. Though the main crop is now blueberries, the zuc-



or it may have roots in northeast India, where ghee-drizzled charcoal is placed in bowls of curry to add smoky flavor. But Thai cooks perfume only sweets, like *salim*, mung bean-flour noodles dressed in a smoke-infused coconut syrup. Other desserts—flower-shaped *kleep lamduan* shortbreads; coconut milk, sugar, and flour pyramids called *a-lua*—are made first and then smoked with the candle, whose effects grow stronger the longer it smolders.

According to Nancie McDermott, the author of several Thai cookbooks, *tian op* is used specifically with the types of labor-intensive desserts that derive from Thai palace cuisine. When I told her about Chalermkittichai's cheesecake (see a recipe, at right), she laughed. "*Tian op* is an old-time thing," she said, "and this cake is so 21st century. In Thailand, you'd use it only with a few desserts. You come to America, and there are no rules. It's wonderful." —Betsy Andrews

### Smoked Coconut Cheesecake

SERVES 8-10

Smoking the cream cheese is optional, but if you'd like to, you can order the Thai incense candle online (see page 77 for a source).

- 3 8-oz. packages cream cheese
- 1 cup ground chocolate wafer cookie crumbs
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- 2 cups heavy cream, chilled
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup coconut milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup confectioners' sugar
- 2 oz. white chocolate, shaved

1 Place a Thai incense candle in a 3"-wide bowl; place within a larger bowl containing cheese. Light candle; cover bowl with foil. Smoke for 30 minutes. Uncover bowl; set aside.

2 Heat oven to 300°. Mix crumbs and butter in a bowl; press into bottom of a 9" springform pan wrapped in foil. Bake until set, about 15 minutes; cool. Process cheese and sugar in a food processor until smooth. Add 1 cup cream, salt, vanilla, eggs, and yolk; process until smooth. Pour cream cheese custard over cooled crust; bake until cheesecake jiggles slightly in center, about 1 hour, 15 minutes. Cool, and chill for 4 hours.

3 Whisk remaining cream, coconut milk, and confectioners' sugar until stiff peaks form; spread over cake. Sprinkle with chocolate to garnish.

5 To Try

## Spring Flowers

Five great edible blossoms

**1 Borages** Sweet and herbaceous, these star-shape blossoms of an herb found throughout the Mediterranean release a cucumber-like fragrance and flavor. The powder-blue flowers, a traditional garnish for a Pimm's cup, are a natural match with cucumbers in salads and sauces.

**2 Nasturtiums** These spicy flowers come in shades ranging from pale yellow to deep red. Drop a bloom onto a bowl of gazpacho, or fold chopped petals into softened chèvre or herbed butter to unleash their peppery flavor.

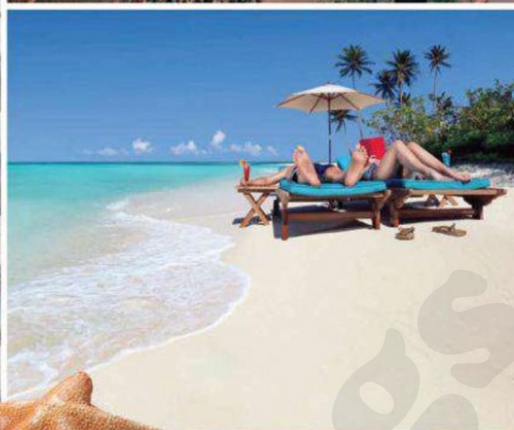
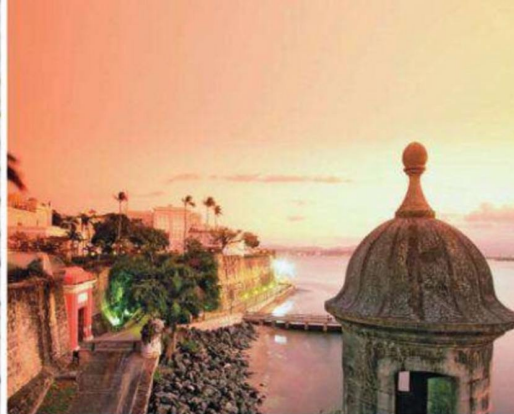
**3 French Marigolds** These yellow-trimmed vermilion blooms taste like a blend of tarragon and radicchio. Toss the petals into a salad in place of bitter greens, sprinkle them over grilled fish, or lay them on a stack of sautéed prawns. Often used in orange dyes, the flowers will also lend their color and flavor to rice dishes the same way that saffron does.

**4 Cornflowers** Also called "bachelor's buttons" (supposedly because love-struck lads once wore them on their lapels), these blossoms have a subtle, sweet spiciness. Toss them into salads, add them to tea blends for a clovelike aroma, or nestle them onto frosted cakes as a garnish.

**5 Amaranths** Despite their berry-red color, these textured petals taste exactly like sweet corn. Sometimes known by their poetic common name, "love-lies-bleeding," the sprigs add color draped over poached eggs or tucked into a fruity beverage. Order these flowers from The Chef's Garden ([chefs-garden.com](http://chefs-garden.com)). —Katrina Moore



# PUERTO RICO



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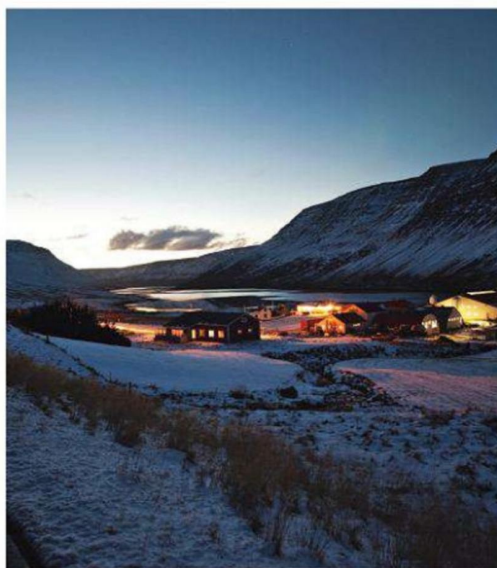
# True Nordic

In Iceland, dinner is never far from the sea

**E**VEN BY ICELANDIC standards, the Westfjords is isolated. A cliff-rung peninsula on the island's northwest corner, it is tied to the country only by a four-mile-wide isthmus. Fish air-cure in drying sheds left open to the salty wind. Polar bears stray onto the shore. The hardy souls who reside here make their living in the chilled North Atlantic hunting for cod and haddock.

Monkfish or halibut often winds up in the panfry, a one-skillet meal of seasoned, butter-fried fish, vegetables, and potatoes at Tjöruhúsið, a dockside restaurant in the town of Ísafjörður, open from May to September. When I happened upon it on recent visit to Westfjords, it reminded me of Try Pots, the chowder house from *Moby Dick*: fish soup bubbled on a stove manned by the grizzled chef and co-owner Magnús Hauksson, whose ingredients for his *heimilismatur* ("home-style cooking") menu arrive straight off the boats.

After bobbing all morning near the Arctic Circle with two long-line fishermen, I was grateful for the Viking-size panfry placed in front of me in Tjöruhúsið's timber-frame dining room, formerly a *harðfiskur* (wind-dried fish) storage shed. Juggling skillets, Hauksson had tossed rich Icelandic butter atop sizzling plaice filets, finishing the dish with tiny boiled potatoes dug from a nearby field. Even cloaked under wild mushroom gravy, the fish that had been fathoms deep hours earlier was the dish's essence. It was Nordic cooking at its most comforting, worthy of a sea voyage. —Shane Mitchell



Clockwise from top left: Ósvör Maritime Museum; Tjöruhúsið's panfry; Suðureyri, an Icelandic village; sharing a panfry; Tjöruhúsið's fish chowder; the author in Westfjords.

JAMES FISHER (6)



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» chinis that star in this annual festival come from area farms and gardens. They show up fried; baked into casseroles, breads, and cakes; and churned into ice cream. Prizes go to the "best dressed," ugliest, biggest, and smallest squash, though the highlights may be crownings of the Duke of Zuke and Zuqueenie. Info: [www.afn.org/~windsor](http://www.afn.org/~windsor)



**May**  
**12-13**  
**KA'Ū COFFEE FESTIVAL**  
*Pāhala, Hawaii*

The Big Island's Mauna Loa slopes, in the Ka'ū district, once home to sugarcane plantations, nowadays are planted with coffee beans. Since former cane workers began growing coffee here in the mid-1990s, the local beans have won accolades for its flowery taste with hints of chocolate, cherry, and coconut. At this fourth annual festival, handpicked and sun-dried beans are ground and brewed for attendees, while local musicians and hula dancers take the stage. Then Ka'ū farmers invite all to explore their land and learn tricks of the trade. Information: [kaucoffeefest.com](http://kaucoffeefest.com)

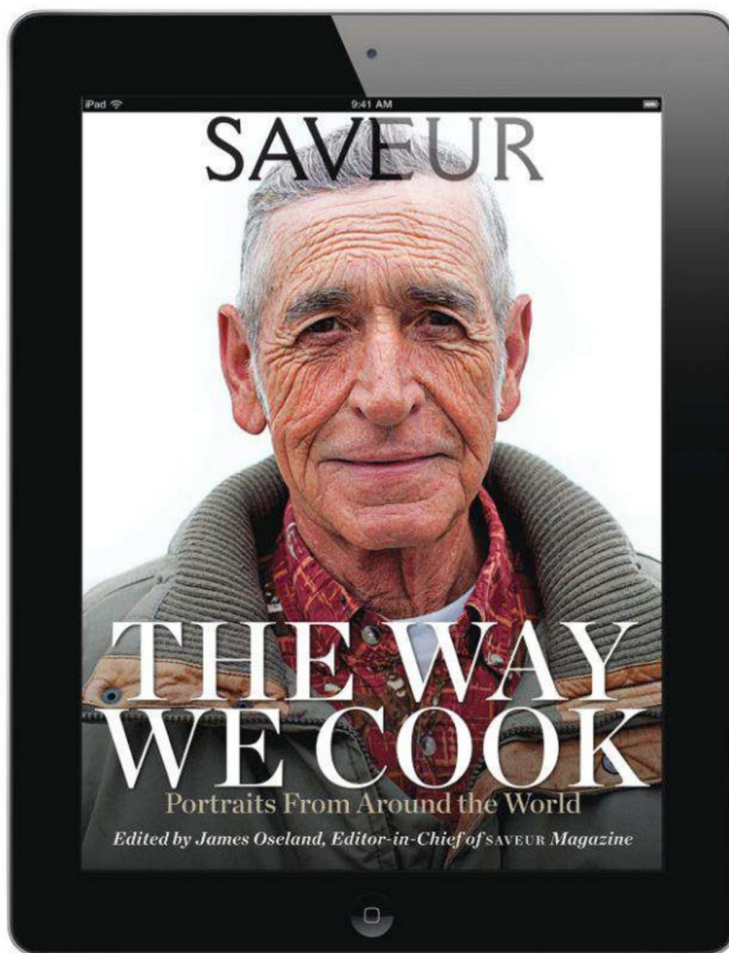
**May**  
**17-19**  
**INTERNATIONAL BISCUIT FESTIVAL**  
*Knoxville, Tennessee*

Folks come from all over the South to pig out at this beloved fête, where biscuit-eating opportunities abound, from breakfast under a tent to brunch in the park. Take a stroll down the biscuit-vendor-lined thoroughfare at the heart of the fest, then thrill to the bake-off. In 2010, the winner was the Fat Elvis: a biscuit sandwich of bacon, peanut butter, and bananas. For those with talents other than baking, there's the biscuit-themed songwriting contest. Info: [biscuitfest.com](http://biscuitfest.com)

**May**  
**27**  
**GOOMERI PUMPKIN FESTIVAL**  
*Goomeri, Australia*

At this 16th annual festival in Queensland, Australia, contestants flex muscles in pumpkin shotput, rolling, and pulling contests. Lazier souls simply eat foods that showcase the many varieties on offer, including the state's native Queensland Blue, a dark-green roasting and baking pumpkin.

Wash down grilled pumpkin-laced sausages with pumpkin-flavored ales, chased by a hunk of pumpkin fudge. Info: [goomeripumpkinfestival.com.au](http://goomeripumpkinfestival.com.au)



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**Eat Street**

# Market of Plenty

Most visitors to Costa Rica zip through the capital city, San José, on their way to beaches or jungles. But I like to linger there, if only to spend a morning at Mercado Central, a block-long covered market built in 1880 that contains a warren of produce stalls, *sodas* (small, family-run eateries), bric-a-brac counters, and *cafés*. After ogling the spiky red *mamon* (rambutan) and giant green *guanabana* (soursop) at the fruit stands, I slake my thirst with a *refresco* at **Soda Los Angeles** (506/2223-2606), on the market's southwest side, where freshly squeezed juices such as *cas* (sour guava), and *mora* (raspberries) are mixed with water or milk and sugar. If I'm hungry, I go for *olla de carne* (the local pot-au-feu, made with beef short ribs) or a *casado* (a heaping plate of rice, beans, fried plantains, and salad, with chicken, meat, or seafood), dishes that emerge from the upstairs kitchen at **Soda Cristal** (506/2223-5002),

in the market's center. For dessert, there's **La Sorbetera de Lolo Mora** (506/2256-5000), near the main entrance. This 111-year-old ice cream parlor makes one flavor only: a heady mix of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and vanilla with a granita-like texture. I top off the roving meal on the market's northeast end at **Cafeteria y Café Central** (506/2222-1769). The local arabica variety here—brewed using mild peaberry beans—is prepared as a *café chorreado*; hot water is poured into a coffee-filled sock that's set over an aluminum pot called a *chorreador*, resulting in a fresh, bright cup. Sometimes I stop by **Souvenirs Midway** (506/2233-4660), at the southeast end, to pick up one of these cute pots to take to someone back home. For a potent end to my visit, there's **El Gran Vicio** (506/2223-5976). At this 130-year-old cantina, shots of Costa Rican sugarcane brandy are spiked with red *sirope de kola* (kola nut syrup)—a bittersweet San José tradition. —Jane Sigal

THE PANTRY, page 77: Info on purchasing a Thai incense candle, visiting Westfords, and more.



Clockwise from top left, scenes from San José, Costa Rica's Mercado Central: scoops of the house specialty (a vanilla-spice ice cream) flanking a raspberry gelatine at La Sorbetera de Lolo Mora; a family-run eatery, called a *soda*; a coffee purveyor weighs Costa Rica-grown beans; a server dispenses a fruit-juice *refresco* at a market *soda*.

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# REVIEW

## American in Paris

A young chef is showing the French a thing or two

BY ALEXANDER LOBRANO PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENT CHAMUSSY

**T**HE FIRST REAL MODERN American restaurant in Paris opened last December. It's called Verjus, it occupies a sunny triplex space in a 19th-century house overlooking the Palais-Royal, and it's run by New Orleans-born, Boston-bred chef Braden Perkins, 32, and his partner in work and life, Saint Paul native Laura Adrian, 27.

After two-plus decades of living in France, unless someone had told me Verjus was owned by Americans, I'd never have suspected—not upon arriving, anyway—that the owners were anything but French, so perfectly does the *mise-en-scène* of the white-painted dining room with huge picture windows master the codes of the new wave of young-chef-helmed bistros in Paris (mismatched flea market chairs, bare wooden tables). The service is the tip-off. The young waitresses are friendly but don't want your stress. You'll be served when you're served, so relax. In any event, I'm never much fussed by the service when the food is this good. And it's wonderful, at last, to be in a Paris dining room where there's so much laughter in the crowd noise.

Verjus has been a hit with food-loving anglophone expats like me, and it's also gotten the thumbs-up from a couple of the more incisive young French food writers. One even described the place as having “un vibe très Brooklyn”—high praise, as young Parisians are currently besotted with the New York City borough they perceive as hip and assiduously gastronomic but unpretentious. Since Perkins revises his two dinner-only tasting menus almost daily (one is four courses, the other, six), his imagination is always sparking. As evidenced by a winter starter of a poached egg with three types of grilled mushrooms (shiitake, button, and a tiny wild Japanese one) on a bed of wild rice with microscopic dandelion leaves and a sprig

of dill, his food can be so fragile, intimate, and self-effacing that it induces perfect, fleeting, ego-free moments of Zen pleasure.

If none of the dishes throws flavor bombs or talks too loud, all of them intrigue with impeccable logic and sly intelligence. A perfect example: a dish of pan-seared duck breast cooked rare and served sliced on top of ravioli filled with caramelized red onions, garnished with smoked celery root skin, orange segments, microgreens, and parsley-infused oil. The surprise Perkins teases out here is the nexus between the palates of central Europe and Japan: Duck, red onion, and orange is as Bohemian as can be, but the earthy celery root and small sharp bolt of herbaceousness read *ryokan*. At least that was my take on this terrific dish. A Parisian at the next table was vocally disconcerted: “Mais c'est bizarre du oignon rouge avec du canard!” (“Red onion with duck is weird!”) Overhearing this remark, I thought, You'd never get this kind of guff at Spring, the other well-known Paris restaurant with an American chef. There, Daniel Rose has so diligently assimilated the classic calibrations of the French palate that there's nothing that would gall a Gaul; he's a French-trained chef making French food, however fresh his perspective.

The first time I ate at Verjus, I was abashed to find myself cast, initially, in the role of the prissy Parisian. The dining room had none of the social and psychic tension of a French restaurant; you just kind of came in and sat down. The atmosphere was so low-key, it reminded me of the peace-and-love, spider-plant vegetarian places I used to go to in Northampton, Massachusetts, when I was a student at Amherst College. Then I remembered I not only like but prefer this social frequency in a restaurant. The first dish was a pair of roasted beets garnished with caraway seeds in a shallow pool of buttermilk; the next was brought out by an earnest young man with Clark Kent glasses, who I guessed was the chef. On that plate was a winter still life of pickled baby leeks with a

quail's egg, Israeli couscous, oven-dried radicchio leaves, and a scattering of ash made from the green ends of the leeks. I loved the bitter staccato punctuation of the radicchio on the longer play of caramelized leek, and the little egg oozing into the chewy couscous. Next came a superb rectangle of skillet-cooked salmon garnished with a dab of grilled eggplant purée and salmon roe, with a tofu flan topped by a corsage of tiny mesclun leaves and razor-fine slices of fennel bulb. Worldly, casually sophisticated, sensual, and satisfying, this dish was a brilliant cameo of the best of contemporary American cooking.

After several more meals at Verjus, it became obvious to me that conventional restaurant reviewing protocol—the anonymous writer (which I was) comes for a few paid meals and then slinks away to deliver a verdict—just wouldn't work. There simply wasn't any honest way for me to be blasé about the nerviness (shading to audacity) of an American chef deciding to open his first restaurant in Paris.

So I met Perkins for a coffee on a frigid morning in a branch of Le Pain Quotidien, the Belgian bakery chain. I knew already that Perkins had cooked with Seattle chef Tom Douglas for several years before moving to Paris five years ago. Since he'd run the incredibly successful, now-defunct “Hidden Kitchen,” a supper club in the Paris apartment he and Adrian share, I assumed he knew what he'd be up against. “What we're doing is unabashedly *not* a French restaurant,” he told me. “Paris is on the receiving end of food trends today, and it makes some people a little uncomfortable, some a little defensive.” But if Paris is no longer the global axis of gastronomy, why did he move here instead of, say, Philadelphia? “I wanted the experience of cooking with French produce,” he said. “What's cool is democratizing good food, taking it down from the pedestal

**Trout with roasted clams, pickled turnips, pumpkin, and chipotle broth at Verjus, in Paris.**

ALEXANDER LOBRANO is the author of *Hungry for Paris* (Random House, 2008). His most recent article for *SAVEUR* was “*Eternal Terrain*” (March 2012).









Clockwise from top: The entrance to Verjus, on rue de Richelieu in Paris's Palais-Royal neighborhood; pan-seared duck with caramelized red onion-filled ravioli, smoked celery root skin, orange segments, and microgreens; the dining room at Verjus, with a view of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal.

where the French expect to find it. Too often in France, the best food is humbled by antagonistic hospitality and an upright atmosphere."

Before the puckishly named Verjus—verjus, *bien sûr*, is the juice of unripened grapes; this handle was inspired by the restaurant's youth relative to the long-running Anglo-owned Paris wine bars of two of Perkins's friends and neighbors, Mark Williamson of Willi's Wine Bar and Tim Johnston of Juveniles—my experiences of soi-disant American food in Europe had always been cringe making. Only last summer, the best and most famous food writer in France wrote an article about American food that was a hailstorm of stereotypes, upbraiding our eats as an unappetizing collage of ice cream, pizza, sandwiches, barbecue, hamburgers, ketchup, and even chewing gum, for Pete's sake. The grand finale was a photograph of an obese woman standing on a scale.

This is the international challenge for the first generation of serious American chefs to come of age since Alice Waters and company began teaching the United States to eat well: Every day, people all over the world think they've eaten typical American food when they haven't—unless you consider T.G.I. Friday's, McDonald's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken the sum of what's typical. Against this backdrop, can the rest of the world take American cooking seriously? Perkins thinks so. "Contemporary American cooking is ingredient driven and restlessly creative," he insists. "As Americans, we're not afraid to work across different spectrums and create new dishes, like Korean tacos. This approach runs counter to the Cartesian French way of thinking—you know, that there's a right and a wrong way to do everything. The idea that the 'wrong' way might produce something interesting—even delicious—doesn't register much in Paris."

Such serendipity is the reason a meal at Verjus should be on the to-do list of anyone who's Paris-bound anytime soon. Perkins's distinctly American culinary creativity interprets the best Gallic produce in a way that's unique and often spectacularly good.

It occurred to me that while I came to France a long time ago on bended knees in the hope of being gastronomically enlightened, that story is well and truly over. Perkins doesn't have a trace of the colonial bumpkin complex I once suffered from. His restaurant is the first self-described American address in the Old World that's ever made me feel proud. 🐦

Verjus 52 rue de Richelieu, 1st, Paris (33/1-4297-5440; [verjusparis.com](http://verjusparis.com)). Hours: Monday–Friday 7–10 P.M. Four courses: \$72; six courses: \$92.





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# ROUTES



## Hog Heaven

Iowa's tenderloin sandwich is bliss on a bun

BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARIANA LINDQUIST

**O**F PORK PRODUCTS THAT make Iowans proud, the tenderloin is king. We don't mean a roast that requires marinade or seasonings, then gets carved, plated, and eaten with knife and fork; in Iowa the tenderloin is a sandwich. Sometimes abbreviated to BPT for "breaded pork tenderloin," it consists of a trimmed and pounded-tender

slice of pork loin that is battered, fried, and sandwiched in a roll along with pickle chips, raw onion, ketchup, and mustard. (It's not a schnitzel because it's deep-fried rather than pan-cooked, and is always served on a bun.) You'll find BPTs at cafés, diners, drive-ins, and eat-shacks that earn partisans because they serve the juiciest or the widest.

Why Iowa for such a thing? A stroll through the spectacularly large Swine Barn at the annual State Fair helps explain the local passion for pork. Here you'll learn that pork

production adds \$2.5 billion to the state's economy and that one out of three hogs raised in America is Iowan. Indiana actually lays claim to having invented the BPT—at Nick's Kitchen in Huntington, in 1904—but nowhere is the tenderloin more exalted than in Iowa, especially in the farmlands of the western part of the state, where hogs' favorite food, corn, grows especially high.

Some BPTs, particularly those made in and around Des Moines, flaunt a disk of fried pork as wide as a dinner plate, making

JANE and MICHAEL STERN are *SAVEUR* contributing editors and the authors of *Roadfood.com*.





its placement between the top and bottom of a standard hamburger bun comical. The Original King Tenderloin, served since 1952 at Smitty's, just minutes from the airport, is too broad to be hoisted by the bun in any normal way—even by a person with abnormally long fingers—but it is thin enough to tear off and eat pieces of the circumference until the bun is reachable. Twice breaded with cracker meal procured in Chicago, and then deep-fried in soybean oil (“for the flavor,” says third-generation chef Ben Smith),

Smitty's tenderloin is all about the crunch that envelops the slim layer of juicy pork.

Mr. Bibb's Tenderloins, a stark, open-kitchen sandwich shop in Des Moines's Highland Park neighborhood, serves its own double-wide, centimeter-thin 'loin fully accoutred (if you order it “deluxe”) with ketchup, mustard, pickles, sliced tomatoes, lettuce, and onions. Essential companion: lushly crusted onion rings. We happened to eat our tenderloins at 10 A.M. on the first day of classes at nearby North High School, since proprietor

Kathy Essex fretted that, by noon, her tiny establishment would be overwhelmed with students who come for sandwiches and extra-thick chocolate malts. At B&B Grocery, just a few miles away, we ate insanely wide tenderloins alongside lunching local police officers who took great delight in demonstrating how to fold the meat over once or even twice inside

**The breaded pork tenderloin sandwich with ketchup-drenched onion rings at Mr. Bibb's Tenderloins in Des Moines.**





Top row, from left: a "Killer Reuben" from B&B Grocery; sandwich makers at B&B; rhubarb pie at Darrell's Place. Bottom row: Jeff Munch trims tenderloin at Darrell's; John A. Brooks Jr., co-owner of B&B; Roger Nelson, a regular at the Red Barn.

the bun to make it easier to handle.

The following day we ventured an hour west to what many connoisseurs consider the heart of tenderloin country. Here in Audubon and Cass counties, the cutlet is significantly thicker and therefore juicier and porkier; some sandwiches overhang their bun, but few are silly-wide. At the Farmer's Kitchen, co-owner Charlene Johnson's fried pork is plump and succulent, merely halloed by a buttermilk-tinged, seasoned breading. At the Chatterbox Cafe in Audubon, Samantha Goetz took our order, cooked it, and delivered a piping-hot slab of sweet pork with an especially gnarled crust, the sandwich sided by a heap of pickle chips and topped with a thick slice of white onion. Samantha also gave us the lowdown on the restaurant's rather goofy signature item, the "hamburloin"—a burger atop a tenderloin in a single bun. She was joined in her regional-food discourse by various men and women from other tables, all of whom treat this

place as a second home, pouring their own coffee when they need refills or when they come between meals to chat with friends.

From the outside, Darrell's Place in Hamlin looks more like a crop-duster hangar than a notable restaurant. The interior is all beer signs and bare Formica. And the tenderloin, made in the thick-patty style, is magnificent. Winner of the first annual Iowa Pork Producers Association Award in 2003, this sandwich sports a wavy, thousand-faceted bread crumb crust that hugs a luscious lode of pork. And by the way, Darrell's rhubarb pie, made using stalks secured from customers' patches, is peerless in a state famous for its pie: piled into a master-class crust, its tantalizing sugar-tart filling is balanced by the cascade of soft-serve vanilla ice cream that is its traditional garnish.

Just south of Audubon, in Exira, we had what might be our favorite Iowa tenderloin at a low-slung eatery with four tables called Red Barn. Costing \$3.60, it is super wide but also mighty thick, really juicy and snug inside a savory crust, garnished with pickles and onions. The tenderloin is just one item on an exemplary Hawkeye State menu that also includes pea salad with shredded cheese bound in Miracle Whip, a lovely loosemeats sandwich

special made of spiced minced beef and onion, and nutmeg-dusted vanilla custard.

By 11:45 A.M., every seat in the Red Barn was occupied and we were sharing our table with four strangers. Whereas habitués may linger when they come for coffee midmorning or in the afternoon, country-café courtesy at mealtime demands freeing up a seat as soon as one has finished eating. We quickly polished off dessert and paid our check, worrying all the while that we had appropriated two seats from a rotation of customers that rarely includes anyone from out of town.

## THE GUIDE Iowa Tenderloin Tour

**B&B Grocery** 2001 SE Sixth Street, Des Moines (515/243-7607; bbgrocerymeatdeli.com)

**The Chatterbox Cafe** 1201 N Division Street, Audubon (712/563-3428)

**Darrell's Place** 4010 First Street, Hamlin (712/563-3922)

**The Farmer's Kitchen** 319 Walnut Street, Atlantic (712/243-2898; farmerskitchen.net)

**Mr. Bibbs Tenderloins** 2705 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines (515/243-0929)

**Smitty's** SW 1401 Army Post Road, Des Moines (515/287-4742; smittystenderloins.com)

**Red Barn** 613 West Washington Street, Exira (712/268-2645)





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# Portuguese Crush

The country's wines are food-friendly, affordable, and fantastic

BY HEATHER LAISKONIS

**T**HREE YEARS AGO, I was tasked with building a predominantly Portuguese wine list for the opening of the restaurant Aldea in New York City. Having worked for most of my adult life in restaurants, I was confident in my knowledge of wine, but the unique styles and grapes of Portugal were a virtual mystery to me. I had never seen a Portuguese wine on a high-end wine list, and the few \$10 bottles that had slowly started to make their way onto my local wine-store shelves didn't particularly inspire me. Fortunately, I had a cadre of Portuguese wine professionals, as well as Aldea's Portuguese-American chef, George Mendes, to guide me. What I discovered was a real surprise: a world of food-friendly wines that I was excited to share with diners.

Although stateside wine lovers like me think of Portugal as a new discovery, the

country—long and narrow and hugging Spain's western border along the Atlantic coast—has a winemaking history that stretches back as far as 1200 B.C. The Phoenicians and the Romans made wine here. Port, the country's iconic fortified wine, has been a sought-after export since the start of the 18th century. But it wasn't until Portugal became a member of the European Union in 1986 that the focus started to shift to unfortified wines. With that new affiliation came a large influx of cash to modernize not only roadways and schools, but also wineries. Efforts began to shift from simple wines made for domestic consumption to wines that could stand up to global scrutiny. Scores of young vintners, many of whose families reflect Portugal's rich heritage of winemaking, began studying abroad to bring some of the latest viticultural innovations back home. Nowadays there is very serious wine being made in Portugal.

With more than 300 indigenous grapes,

plus a growing trend toward wines made with cabernet and other international grape varieties, the landscape is complex to navigate. I've found that it helps to know something about Portugal's notable wine regions. The country is roughly the size of Indiana, but its climate and topography are surprisingly varied.

In the north lie lush coastal valleys, with rainfall comparable to that of the Pacific Northwest. This region, called Minho, is where the most well-known Portuguese wine is produced. Some say this light, easy white is named *vinho verde*, or "green wine," because it's meant to be enjoyed young. Others attribute its moniker to the verdant landscapes surrounding the vineyards. Either way, *vinho verde* is one of the most refreshing ways I know of to start

HEATHER LAISKONIS is the general manager and wine director of Aldea in New York City. This is her first article for *SAVEUR*.

Workers crush grapes by foot at Quinta de La Rosa winery in Portugal's Duoro region.



off a summer meal. Usually a blend of local white grapes—floral loureiro, citrusy trajadura, tart paderia, and, for richer wines, aromatic alvarinho—its best examples have one thing in common: freshness, with a touch of effervescence. There are dozens of vinho verdes to choose from, most costing under \$15, but **JM Fonseca Twin Vines Vinho Verde 2011** is my favorite. With hints of lemon and lime, it's low in alcohol (10 percent) and terrific to drink with briny oysters.

Winemakers in this region also bottle white wines made entirely with alvarinho, a grape more commonly known in the States by its Spanish name, albariño. The terrific **Quinta do Louridal Poema 2009**, produced by a winemaking family spanning six generations, unleashes hints of nectarine and honeysuckle, and a finish of sparkle. I always recommend it with a spicy seafood dish like shrimp *alinho*; its subtle sweetness enhances complex heat and garlicky flavors.

Below Minho, the large Beiras region spans the country east to west; toward the coast here is an area called Bairrada. The soil is mostly chalky clay, which the vines like, and cool Atlantic breezes help promote the grapes' acidity. While the region is famous for the red grape baga, I look to some of the lesser-known white varieties. The tart grape arinto is usually blended with other grapes, but I like it on its own. A great bottle is the **Campolargo Arinto 2009**. Though it sits for six months in oak, this wine shows none of the butterscotch notes we've come to expect from barrel-aged whites. Instead, it's got great minerality, with bright grapefruit notes. It's often paired with seafood, but I think it works surprisingly well with dessert; it cleanses the palate when served with pound cake or creamy custards.

To Minho's east, the vineyards of the Douro cling to rocky hillsides that plunge into the region's namesake river. Sheltered from moist sea breezes by mountains, the Douro experiences incredibly hot, dry summers, while the high altitudes bring equally cold winter nights. Winemaking here is challenging, but the payoff is fantastic. This is Portugal's premier wine region—the world's oldest controlled domain for wine, established in 1756, and the area where the grapes for port are grown: floral touriga franca, spicy tinta cão, and others.

The same grapes get pressed for unfortified wines. Traditionally, these have been robust reds with a rich stewed fruit flavor. But there are also Douro wines that are more modern and balanced, with a fair amount of food-friendly acidity. **Quinta de La Rosa Reserve 2007** is crafted, in part, from touriga nacional,

which I often describe as similar to cabernet sauvignon, only lighter and more herbaceous. This grape yields a versatile red that goes with lots of foods, particularly seafood stews.

In terms of value, Portugal rewards wine drinkers most in the \$50 to \$75 range, where its world-class wines—ones suitable for aging—are more affordable than comparable bottles from other countries. The Douro produces many of these. The **Quinta do Vale Meão Douro 2008**, from a winery founded in 1877, is a stunning wine made from touriga nacional, touriga franca, fairly tannic tinta roriz, and the softer tinta barroca. They have struck a beautiful balance in their winemaking, blending old-world techniques with a modern facility. The grapes are handpicked and (as at Quinta de La Rosa) foot-crushed, but the fermenting tanks are gleaming stain-



less steel. Then the wine is aged for two years, mostly in new French oak. The result is a powerful red wine, with lush dark-cherry flavor, a bit of smokiness, and a velvety long finish. It stands up to grilled and highly seasoned meats.

Not to be overshadowed by its reds, though, are the Douro's elegant whites. **Guru 2010** is a relatively new wine from the veteran winemaking couple Sandra Tavares da Silva and Jorge Seródio Borges, who call their operation Wine & Soul. Aged in French casks for six months, this is a big, complex white. Its sea-breeze aroma belies an oaky creaminess on the palate, and it tastes of nectarines and other stone fruits, but with a long, dry finish. It can stand up to hearty dishes like *porco à alentejana*, that classic Portuguese marriage of pork and clams.

While the Douro's tradition is long established, there are up-and-coming regions in Portugal where winemakers are creating some of the coolest wines I have ever tasted. In the westernmost part of the country surrounding Lisbon, there's a newly anointed region, Lis-

boa, where the gorgeous **Quinta do Monte d'Oiro Reserva 2003** is made. With its leathery fruit and pepper and violet aromas, this wine (96 percent syrah and 4 percent viognier), so embodies Côte Rotie style that if you closed your eyes and drank it, you'd swear you were in the Rhône Valley. If I had to choose one wine to drink forever, this would be it. At the restaurant, I pour it with richly sauced meat dishes, like the full-flavored stewed goat with cherries.

Toward Portugal's south, the hotter, more Mediterranean region of Alentejo is starting to gain as much attention as the Douro, thanks in part to vintners like David Baverstock, of the winery Esporão. Baverstock, an Australian, makes many wines, but the **Esporão Reserva 2008** delivers the most bang for the buck. For just under \$25, this blend of native and international grapes delivers beautiful balance with hints of chocolate, spice, and soft tannins. A touch of alicante bouschet gives the wine a striking purple gemstone color. Though most of the bottles I uncork day to day are enjoyed by someone other than me, this is the one I drink at home whenever I barbecue. It reminds me that, no matter how ancient and diverse Portugal's winemaking tradition is, it is still, deliciously, evolving.

## Tasting Notes

**Campolargo Branco Arinto 2009 (\$18)** A refreshing white made using all arinto grapes, this smells of melon, vanilla, and pencil shavings, with salty and grapefruit flavors mellowed by oak.

**Esporão Reserva 2008 (\$25)** Blueberry aromas, with hints of chocolate and vanilla, yield to ripe dark-fruit flavors and a long finish. Try it with grilled steak or a strong, ripe cheese.

**JM Fonseca Twin Vines Vinho Verde 2011 (\$8)** Floral and citrus aromas characterize this light, refreshing, and subtly effervescent white, perfect as a summer aperitif.

**Quinta de La Rosa Reserve 2007 (\$48)** Made from hand-picked fruit matured in large French barriques for 12 to 18 months, this deep purple blend has persistent flavors of blackberries, plums, and coffee.

**Quinta da Terrugem Aliança Alentejo Single Estate 2007 (\$23)** Aged for a year in new French oak, this medium-bodied, ruby-hued blend has a ripe, sweet nose, with touches of mineral and raisin and a long, licorice finish.

**Quinta do Louridal Poema Alvarinho 2009 (\$32)** Full of ripe golden apple with a great minerality and a light effervescence, this medium-bodied white is a great match for spicy foods.

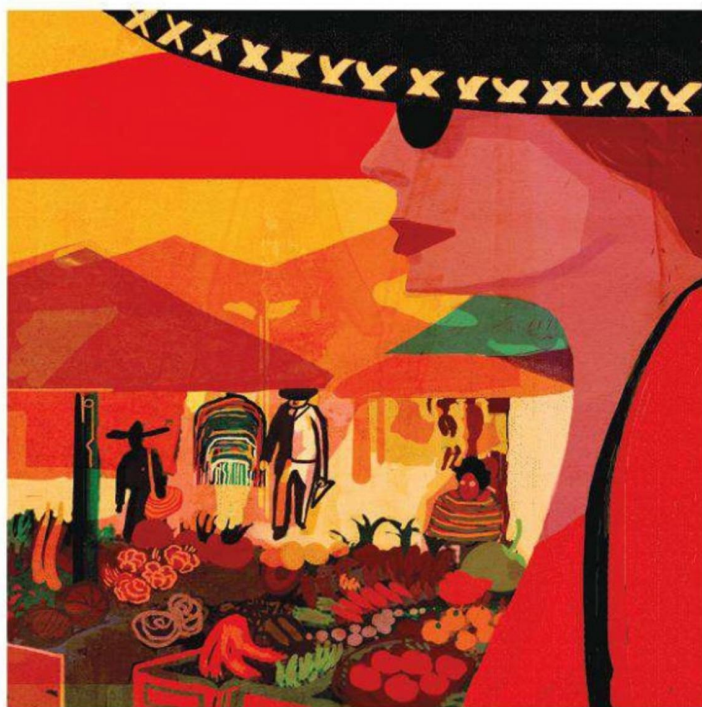
**Quinta do Monte d'Oiro Reserva 2003 (\$45)** This aromatic red smells of both bacon and jasmine, with a chocolately flavor and a sexy velvet finish.

**Quinta do Vale Meão Douro 2008 (\$87)** Beautifully structured, with great acidity, this red has berry aromas and hints of smoke and vanilla.

**Wine & Soul Guru 2010 (\$45)** A creamy, oak-aged white tasting of stone fruits, this one finishes long and dry and can hold up to hearty pork and seafood dishes.—H.L.



## ESSAY



# Universal Language

Two families bond over a shared love of food

BY FRANCINE PROSE

**M**Y SON LEON AND his wife, Jenny, joke that their love blossomed over enchiladas. Jenny prepared them for him on one of their early dates. Jenny is from Mexico, and we couldn't have been happier to discover that she is not only an enchanting person, but also a terrific cook. Like Leon, in no time, we fell for her and her delicious food, too. It's hard to choose between Jenny's pozole, a meaty stew made with hominy and chiles; nopales, cactus paddles peeled, sliced, boiled, and served in a salad; chiles rellenos, poblano peppers stuffed with cheese, then lightly battered and fried. Each time she'd visit Mexico, Jenny would return to New York with a mole sauce that only her aunt knows how to prepare, or with tamales that no one makes like her grandma.

Ever since a mutual friend in Brooklyn introduced Leon and Jenny, he's made numerous trips to Mexico, where her parents

and grandparents rapidly discovered that her gringo boyfriend was a nice guy who loved her. But distance and everybody's busy schedule had conspired to keep the rest of our family—my husband, Howie, me, and our younger son, Bruno—from meeting Jenny's relatives until she and Leon were to be married. It might seem a little unusual to first meet one's new in-laws minutes before the wedding takes place. But when the families assembled on the steps of the Brooklyn courthouse, everyone's affection for Leon and Jenny was so intense that it seemed as if this was how it was supposed to be. Even the judge was visibly moved by the sight of three generations weeping with joy.

The three-day fiesta that followed was catered by a modest but brilliant Mexican luncheonette in Queens. There were mariachi musicians, a Cuban dance band, plenty of tequila, and a crowd of family and friends

from New York, Los Angeles, and several cities in Mexico. The party, in a loft in Manhattan, was the sort of occasion that ends with everyone exchanging heartfelt vows to get together again as soon as possible. Among those promises was one I gave Jenny's mother, Lourdes, to visit Morelia, the capital of Michoacán—the city where Lourdes grew up, where her family still lives, and which, she promised, is the most beautiful in Mexico.

THE NIGHT HOWIE AND I arrived in Morelia to celebrate the wedding once more, this time at the home of Jenny's great aunt, it was obvious that Lourdes was right about

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ILLUSTRATION: BEPPE GIACOBE/MORGAN GAYNIN



the beauty of her hometown. The zocalo, the leafy main plaza, was brightly illuminated and gorgeous, as were the towers of the magnificent 17th-century stone cathedral. Founded by the Spanish in 1541, this historic center of the stately colonial city, which was designated a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO, evokes its Spanish counterparts—Ávila, Segovia, and Seville. Except that there was livelier music thrumming out of the car radios and playing in the cafés beneath the arched portals of the plaza.

But architecture was only one of the things that Lourdes raved about. Along with Puebla, Morelia is considered a gourmet's paradise, the Lyon of Mexico. In the morning, Lourdes and Jenny's father, Jesus, came to pick up Howie, Bruno, Leon, Jenny, and me from the hotel to take us to the central market for breakfast. Jesus spoke perfect English, while Lourdes was more hesitant about her grasp of the language. It was certainly better than my Spanish, which was virtually nonexistent, except for perhaps 200 words, mostly having to do with food. After a quick coffee, we were off to eat.

I was astonished by the variety of vegetables at the market, the artistry with which they were displayed, the stalls that sold chiles, spices, shelled beans, straw baskets, bright piñatas, bags of mole sauce, and mounds of the chiles rellenos that are probably my favorite Mexican dish. Jesus ordered several plates of *corundas*, which he told me are unique to Michoacán. Shaped a bit like pyramids, they're a regional variation on the tamale. Like tamales, they're made of masa and steamed inside the dark-green leaves of the corn plant. They were delicate, served with red or green salsa and a dollop of *crema*, a pleasingly tart cream, which pleasingly offset the sweetness of the corn.

Jesus and Lourdes went off to fetch the car, and we set out for Quiroga, a town known for its meat—namely *carnitas*, giant loins of pork that, in this town, were braised in orange juice and chiles, then deep fried. You purchase the juicy *carnitas* and tortillas by the kilo from a vendor, then find a seat under the shady awning of the stand, where you can also buy sodas. Jenny appeared with ripe avocados that we sliced and added to the pork, which we tore with our fingers and rolled between fresh tortillas. Though communication with our new in-laws had its limits, the food we shared created an unspoken bond.

After lunch, we headed back to Morelia to rest and dress for dinner at Jenny's great-aunt's home. Promptly at eight, we arrived at a pretty house in an outlying neighborhood. All day,

I'd felt so at ease with Lourdes and Jesus that it slipped my mind that we were the new relations arrived from north of the border. For a moment I became aware of being an outsider, but my anxiety instantly dissipated, because everyone acted as if Jenny had brought home a group of long-lost relatives. The women hugged and kissed us, the men shook hands. Jenny's great uncle, Tío Flor, brought out a volume of photographs, and we marveled over how adorable Jenny was as a baby. The bilingual ones translated and, with a little help, conversation flowed: One of the uncles talked about his racing pigeons; Tío Flor told us about his passion for dancing and the legendary contest in which he won fourth place.

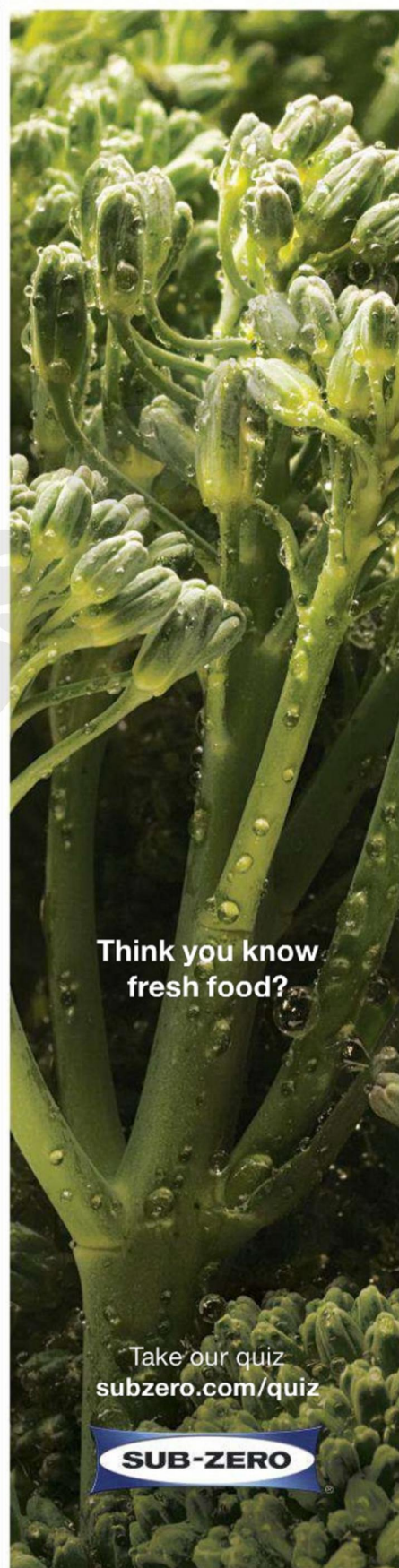
All this time the little cousins were eyeing us shyly until everyone headed up to the roof for the breaking of the large, star-shaped piñata. The scene reminded me of my own sons' birthday parties: kids gone wild with baseball bats and blindfolds. It was pure bedlam until finally, the piñata lay in shreds on the roof. Full of candy, the kids led us back downstairs.

By then, platters of food were appearing from the kitchen: a huge turkey marinated in

### Though communication with our new in-laws had its limits, the food we shared created an unspoken bond

a spicy mole sauce, fresh tortillas, salads. After dessert—a rum cake iced with buttercream—the tables disappeared as magically as they arrived. Someone put on a CD, and Tío Flor took the lead. If he won fourth place in a dance contest, I'd like to see the guy who won first. His dove-gray leather shoes skimmed across the floor as he spun and twirled. Lourdes, the family's other passionate dancer—as I recall from the wedding—joined him, and the rest of us watched, awed by their expertise.

An uncle poured snifters of brandy and led us in a toast. We wished for happiness and health, and raised our glasses to what people everywhere toast when there's love and good will in the room. As I thanked our new relatives for their delicious dinner and warm welcome, and expressed my joy at being part of the family, I found myself in tears—which needed no translation. All of us were moved by the power of love, aided by the fabulous food, to transcend the differences in our backgrounds and to lift us to a higher plane on which we all believed, for the moment, that borders don't exist. ✍️



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**SUB-ZERO**



# Pleasure Island

THE MOUNTAINOUS ISLAND OF CORSICA IS HOME TO A CUISINE THAT'S EQUAL PARTS ALPINE, MEDITERRANEAN, FRENCH, AND ITALIAN—AND ALL ITS OWN

By David McAninch Photographs by Beth Rooney



The hilltop village of Montemaggiore, on the island of Corsica. Facing page: A chestnut flour tart at a picnic in Cap Corse (see page 40 for a recipe).

EURASIA













**I**N THE PALM-SHADED Corsican city of Ajaccio, I'm standing at an open window overlooking the port, which shimmers in the hot sunlight of a late-spring morning. In the distance, I can make out snow-capped mountains, which rise improbably from the Mediterranean Sea. Carried on the breeze is the incenselike scent of the maquis, the thicket of flowering shrubs and herbs that blanket nearly a fifth of this small island and creep up to the streets of Ajaccio.

I take this all in from the book-cluttered apartment of a British expat named Rolli Lucarotti. I met her only yesterday, yet we've already learned a lot about each other. I've told her that, ever since I lived in France in my 20s, Corsica—the birthplace of Napoléon, onetime fief of Genoa, now a kind of orphan province of France—has loomed large in my imagination. My fascination increased as I read accounts of the mysterious island's ancient blood feuds, its monumental prehistoric

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Clockwise from top: Rolli Lucarotti eats a fresh sea urchin caught in the Bay of Ajaccio; the city of Corte; Swiss chard and cheese dumplings. Facing page: A cheese and mint omelet at Lucarotti's apartment in Ajaccio. (See page 40 for recipes.)

sculptures, and its sturdy cuisine. She's told me about how she and her husband moored their small sailboat in Ajaccio's harbor in 1970 during a storm and, bewitched by the beauty of the place, never left.

She's also told me about the years she spent traveling to remote mountain villages, coaxing secrets from grandmothers so she could write *Recipes from Corsica* (Prospect Books, 2004), the first serious English-language account of the island's cooking. It was her book that introduced me to the touchstones of Corsican food: stews made from wild game; hearty

fish soups; savory tarts with local herbs; heavenly pork charcuterie; fresh farmers' cheeses and pungent, washed-rind *tommes*; stuffed pastas; and countless galettes and cakes made from chestnut flour, a native staple that kept many Corsicans alive during times of siege or privation.

I watch Rolli in her kitchen, chopping a bunch of wild mint, which she scrapes into a bowl along with six farm eggs and two spoonfuls of *brocciu*, the moist and crumbly cheese made daily by seemingly every sheep and goat farmer on the island. "They add a little whole milk to the brocciu, so it's richer than ricotta," Rolli tells me in a Somerset accent undiminished by her years here. She pours the mixture into a skillet to make an omelet, which she cooks open face, in the unfussy Corsican style.

Before us on the table is our lunch, a meal of spare, pristine simplicity. On a platter next to the just-set omelet are a dozen sea urchins that



## Island Heritage

Located 100 miles south of Provence and 51 miles off the coast of Tuscany, Corsica's identity bears the cultural imprint of France, Italy, and the other foreign occupiers that have laid claim to the mountainous island since the Greeks first colonized Corsica around 560 B.C. But the centuries-long occupation by Genoa that ended in 1755 (followed by Corsica's sole period of independence, which lasted 14 years and ended when it became a province of France) was the lengthiest and had the most lasting influence on Corsican cooking. Though the cuisine incorporates indigenous foods—cheeses made from the milk of mountain-dwelling sheep and goats, wild boar charcuterie, native grapes for wine, herbs foraged from the maquis—Genoans contributed the crafts of meat preservation and pasta- and cheese-making, and an agricultural system that endowed the island with chestnuts, citrus, and olives. All are essential to the Corsican pantry. Despite its vast coastline, Corsica's history as a target for piracy long discouraged the formation of seaside communities. Hence, fresh fish never developed an important role in Corsica's *cucina povera*, its rustic, country-style cuisine. —Elyse Inamine

we bought this morning at the docks. This, she tells me, is the very essence of coastal Corsican cookery, which isn't so much cookery as it is a matter of acquainting a fresh piece of seafood with a glass of wine, occasionally fire, and some wild herbs. We scoop out the iodine-sweet orange flesh with teaspoons and sip a pale, dry Corsican rosé from mismatched glasses.

There is also a salad of pleasingly bitter chicory that, like much of the produce we saw this morning in Ajaccio's central market—the mint, bundles of lavender and



## Native Wines

Corsican wines, made from indigenous grapes, are increasingly available in the States. Here are a few standouts.

**Domaine Abbattucci General de la Revolution Blanc 2010 (\$89)** is a white blend of six obscure varieties. Its herbal notes evoke the maquis, and its marzipan finish makes it a match for chestnut-based dishes. Made from Corsica's fragrant vermentinu and partially fermented in cement casks, **Domaine de Gioielli Cap Corse Blanc 2010 (\$32)**

shows round, grassy balance. Try it with the herb omelet or minty strozzapreti. Like its neighbor Provence, Corsica excels at rosé. With rhubarb flavor and muscular minerality, **Yves Leccia Patrimoine Rosé 2010 (\$27)** pairs as well with fish as with roasted meats. Made mainly with the refreshing sciacarellu grape, the charcuterie-friendly **Abbattucci Ajaccio Cuvee Faustin Rosé 2010 (\$32)** is full of strawberries, tapering to a saline finish. Corsica's main red grape, niellucciu, is a spicier strain of sangiovese. It's expressed beautifully in **Domaine de Gioielli Vin de Pays de l'Île de Beauté Rouge 2010 (\$37)**, with aromas of violets and licorice; its prune flavor resolves in wild herbs, just right for game. **Antoine Arena Patrimoine Carco Rouge 2009 (\$46)** smells of wet forest but is surprisingly jammy. Try it with ripe cheese.

—Betsy Andrews

thyme, fragrant leeks, young asparagus—were foraged in the maquis, or on other tracts of land on this still remarkably unspoiled island, where large-scale agriculture remains relatively unknown. We eat our lunch with thick slices of country bread and end it with a mousse made from tangy Corsican lemons. This is my first real Corsican meal, a taste of what's to come during the rest of my eight-day trip, and an object lesson in what a big-city chef might call "ingredient-driven cooking."

The next day, Rolli and I follow a hairpin road into the hills far above Ajaccio. We stop for lunch at a rustic inn called U Licettu, which Rolli has described to me as a bastion of old-school Corsican cuisine. This kind of



cooking, she says, tends to reflect the culture of the mountains more than that of the coasts, parts of which were infested with malaria until World War II and remained relatively sparsely populated well into the 20th century. The meal—served in a prim dining room crisscrossed with rough-hewn ceiling beams—has no main courses, no lugubrious progression of ever-weightier dishes. Just small, shared pleasures: handmade cannelloni wrapped around fluffy *brocciu*; meaty white beans called *fagioli* slow-cooked in an herb-flecked tomato sauce; light and crisp zucchini fritters brightened by wild mint; a silky terrine of wild boar, an animal that still roams freely in the maquis. And (cured-meat lover that I am) my holy grail: gossamer ribbons of dry-cured ham called *prizuttu*, generously marbled and dark ruby red, made from Corsican pigs fattened on the chestnuts that grow abundantly on the island. I knew that handmade

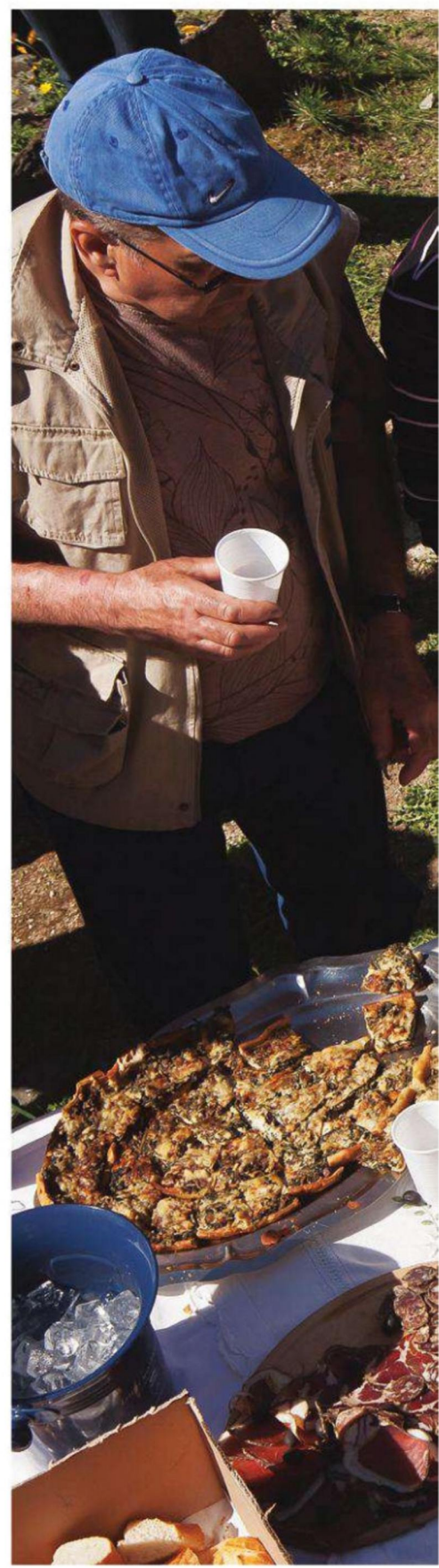
charcuterie—with names, like *coppa* and *lonzu*, that hint at their Italian pedigree—is the coin of the realm here, but Rolli tells me that the extra-fatty charcuterie made from Corsican pigs is a prize on the order of Italy's finest prosciuttos.

Sated and content, I drive Rolli back to town, retracing our morning route. She spies something out the window and asks me to stop. She walks a few yards down the road and rugs green shoots from the loose dirt alongside the asphalt. "Wild garlic," she calls back to me. I shut off the engine and step out, and instantly my ears are filled with a thrumming sound. It is the noise of bees, millions of them—this, I realize, is the song of the maquis.



I'M DRIVING OVER the spine of Corsica, through a stark alpine landscape so unlike the lush coast I left behind a mere 20 miles ago that it seems a continent away. I am technically in France, but not. The road signs, right down to the little tombstone-shaped mile markers, appear to be French government-issue, but the place names are in both French and Corsu, an ancient Tuscan dialect, and I notice that often the French name has been crudely redacted with black spray paint—echoes of an on-and-off independence movement that began in the 1970s. In a one-street village somewhere outside the ancient hilltop city of Corte, I stop at a little café-bar, park myself under the shade of an awning, and overhear men inside speaking Corsu amid the click-clack of dominoes. Their words issue forth in lusty bursts of consonants, in a distinctly Italian cadence.

A wiry older fellow wearing a gold







From far left: An attendee at the township-council picnic near Ogliastru, Cap Corse; cheesecake made with *brocciu* cheese (see page 40 for a recipe); the spread at the township-council picnic, including, clockwise from left: *lonzu* and *saucisson sec*; herb tart; tomato pie; ham and cheese quiche; *coppa* and *saucisson sec*.









From top: Charles Pasquini, a resident of Cap Corse; lemon mousse (see page 40 for a recipe). Facing page: *Tomme* cheeses of various ages made at Fromagerie Ottavi, in the town of Ghisonaccia.

chain gets up from the table and comes out. He presses a hand firmly onto my shoulder and almost shouts, in French, "Yes, my young man!" I order a glass of chilled red Corsican *vin de pays*, and a *coppa* sandwich. It comes with cornichons on a generously buttered baguette stuffed with thin rounds of sumptuous cured meat that could have come from the finest *salumeria* in Rome.

A day later, I circle back to the coast via a scrubby headland called the Agriates Desert, a scorched, jagged

landscape that merges incongruously with some of the island's most idyllic beaches. I find that I'm growing accustomed to Corsica's implausible beauty and starting to dread my encroaching departure, after which I'll no longer happen upon these otherworldly sights. I decide to commemorate one of my last nights here with a special meal at Pasquale Paoli, a jewel-like restaurant in the port of L'Île Rousse, known for its modern interpretations of traditional Corsican cooking. Like many things on this island, it's named after the 18th-century statesman who was the father of Corsican independence, all 14 years of it.

I am seated under a plane tree, whose leaves form a canopy over the restaurant's little terrace, in front of a bone-white bowl that has a tiny portrait of Paoli painted on it. In the bowl, nestled in a dark, limpid broth made from spider crabs, are three delicate, hand-shaped *strozzapreti*. Each plump, mint-scented dumpling—made with equal parts *brocciu* and shredded Swiss chard—was strewn with purple borage flowers, just like ones I've seen dotting the maquis. Six bites, and the *strozzapreti* are gone.

Soon a new bowl arrives, this one

bearing little rectangular sheets of toothsome pasta layered with a ragù of winy, slow-braised beef cheeks. Each bite seems to dissolve on the tongue. And before long, dessert: a sugar-dusted Paris-Brest, typically a wheel of pâte à choux pastry filled with praline cream, reimagined here as a paean to that most cherished Corsican ingredient, the chestnut. The pastry is made with chestnut flour, and the cream filling is flavored with chestnuts. So is the scoop of ice cream on top, which itself is topped with a single candied chestnut. Dessert is served with a nectarlike drink called *muscamaru*, made from Corsican muscat and chestnut liqueur.

I sip for a while and reflect on the meal. Here were four pillars of the rustic Corsican kitchen—handmade pasta, seafood, meat stew, chestnut flour—eased gently into a new dispensation, not with any shocking wizardry, but with an eager desire to reanimate the island's bedrock foods. The chef, I found out when he stopped by my table after my meal, is named Ange Cananzi and grew up in a nearby village. "I was taught the value of our island's ingredients from a young age," he says, "and I try not to put 'luxury' ingredients on the menu." I try to imagine foie gras and caviar here, and indeed the notion seems irrelevant.

I'M DUE TO DEPART tomorrow, and the spirits of this island seem to know it, for I've stumbled on a spot that no person could ever want to leave: a forested mountain glen on Cap Corse, the isle's remote, fingerlike northern tip. The glen is bisected by a burbling, sun-dappled stream called the Guado Grande and occupied by an ancient-looking stone cottage, the only work of civilization that I can see for miles around. In a grassy clearing next to the cottage, a communal picnic is getting under way—just a few folding tables covered in embroidered cotton sheets, some plastic cups for the wine. A tall man in tinted wire-rimmed glasses detaches himself from the crowd and invites me to join the potluck. His name is Jean-Toussaint. The cottage, he says, houses an old olive oil mill. The picnickers are people from the township, which has been raising money to restore the mill, and they've

## Fresh and Aged

Given Corsica's mountainous topography, it's no surprise that sheep's and goat's milk cheeses reign. The most famous of them is *brocciu*, the ricotta-like cheese made from a mixture of whey, the watery by-product of the cheesemaking process, and whole milk—either sheep's, goat's, or both. *Brocciu*, which is richer than ricotta, may be the Corsican cook's most cherished ingredient; the cheese is essential for a host of savory and sweet dishes. The island also produces a natural-rind semifirm style called *tomme*, a generic French term for a disk-shaped cheese. The ones pictured on the facing page are sold under the names *tomme de brébis* (made from sheep's milk) and *tomme de chèvre* (goat's milk). These are aged from one to three months and can range from soft and supple to tangy and crumbly. Developed more recently are the creamy sheep's milk cheeses called *brin d'amour* and *fleur du maquis*, both rolled in dried herbs and made primarily for export. Another Corsican cheese is *fromage piquant*, made from scraps of long-aged *tomme* whose sinus-clearing bite comes solely from fermentation. —D.M.



## The Art of the Cure

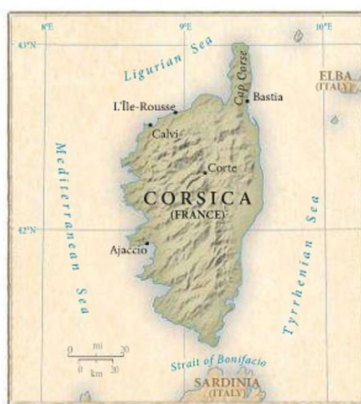
Traditional Corsican charcuterie is made using the same centuries-old methods—salting, air-curing, smoking, and cave-aging—that were likely carried over from Italy during the long periods of Genoan rule. The calling card of Corsican charcuterie is rich marbling, which owes to the free-range, chestnut-fattened Nustrale pigs, a black-skinned breed that is related to the island's native wild boars. Curing was customarily carried out during the *tumbera*, or pig harvest, which takes place in mid-December. Though the *tumbera* is now a ceremonial event, Corsica's charcuterie makers—mostly farmers and rural artisans—still slaughter their animals in early winter and break them down to make the four major types of charcuterie: *coppa* (smoked filet, pictured above right), *lonzu* (dry-cured loin), *prizuttu* (dry-cured ham), and *figatellu* (smoked liver sausage). All are typically enjoyed as a precursor to a meal, though many cooks like to use them, especially *figatellu* and *prizuttu*, to enrich soups and slow-simmered beans and vegetables. —D.M.



gathered to celebrate the first pressing of olives here in 70 years.

In the cool, stone-floored anteroom of the cottage, a half-dozen ladies set finger foods onto platters they've brought from home. Everywhere I turn, a woman offers me something to taste: little squares of homemade quiche, a slice of wild-herb-and-leek tart, farmers'-cheese beignets baked on a chestnut leaf. I migrate outside and loiter by a charcuterie platter piled with the most enticingly fatty *lonzu* I've ever seen, and links of *figatellu*, a gamy-tasting air-dried sausage made from pig livers. A stocky young guy in a soccer jersey walks up, plucks a slice of *lonzu* from the plate, and matter-of-factly tells me the name of the farmer who made it. "Ah," he says, tearing off a bite, "his stuff is always the best."

There are many sweets, too: dense chestnut-almond tarts, chocolate cake, and a fluffy *brocciu* cheesecake called *fiadone*. And now a napkin-lined straw basket emerges from the cottage on the arm of a pretty blond woman in a purple blouse. She walks over to me. "They're *frappes*," she says, raising the basket to show me the little sugar-dusted pastries inside. "Take a few!" I help myself to a handful and find a shady seat on a low stone fence where



I can enjoy them. The inch-long curls of fried dough are pleasure-inducing the way cotton candy is.

And so here I am, licking sugar off my fingers and listening to the Guado Grande's waters as they descend to the Mediterranean. Sharing my patch of shade is an old man in a brimmed cap whose name is Charles Pasquini. He says he was a ship's navigator in the merchant marine. I tell him where I'm from, and he laughs. "Les Américains is the name they used to give people from Cap Corse who left for the New World and came back here to build their great mansions," he says, resting his hands on a wooden cane. I laugh, too, and think, I should be so lucky.







A server at Auberge U Licettu outside Ajaccio, serving white beans with dried mushrooms (left) and Swiss chard cannelloni (see page 40 for a recipe). Facing page: coppa for sale at Ajaccio's central market.

## The Guide Corsica

*Dinner for two with drinks and tip:*

**Inexpensive:**

*Under \$75*

**Moderate:** \$75–\$99

**Expensive:** \$100

*and up*

*Air France (airfrance.us) offers daily connecting flights from Paris Orly to Corsica.*

### WHERE TO STAY **Hotel le Maquis**

Route D55, Grosseto-Prugna, Porticcio (33/4/9525-0555; lemaquis.com). Rates: \$600 double. This 60-year-old waterfront hotel is something of a grande dame on the island, as is founding owner Ketty Salini. She presides over Le Maquis' graceful lobby and its excellent white-linen restaurant, L'Arbousier, where a meal of grilled day-boat fish in olive oil and wild herbs is worth every centime.

### **La Villa Calvi**

Chemin Notre Dame de la Serra, Calvi (33/4/9565-1010; hotel-lavilla.com). Rates: \$500 double. La Villa, in the picturesque beach town of Calvi, could be said to represent the new school of Corsican hospitality: infinity pool, minimalist decor. It's a nice choice if you're exploring the island's northern tier and want to splurge. The hotel bar offers a delicious local version of kir using Corsican myrtle liqueur.

### WHERE TO EAT **Auberge U Licettu**

Plaine de Cuttoli, Cuttoli (33/4/9525-6157; u-licettu.com). *Expensive.* This rustic inn and restaurant, in the herb-covered hills overlooking the Gulf of Ajaccio, offers tra-

ditional Corsican cuisine: wild-boar terrine, headcheese, handmade pastas, and a sumptuous pork shoulder cooked for 10 hours over a wood fire.

### **Restaurant U Pasquale Paoli**

2 place Paoli, L'Île Rousse (33/4/954-706-770; pasquale-paoli.com). *Expensive.* The finely wrought cuisine at this gem of a restaurant in the northern port of L'Île Rousse applies French rigor to native Corsican ingredients. Chef Ange Cananzi's renditions of traditional dishes might include a veal-liver risotto with baby purple artichokes, and other thoughtful takes on local ingredients.

### **La Litorne**

Route de Casevecchie, Ville de Pietrabugno (33/4/9531-4189; restaurantlalitorne.com). *Inexpensive.* This always-busy restaurant, in the foothills north of the waterfront town of Bastia, sees only a smattering of tourists a year. Its cuisine is centered on a wood-fired hearth that turns out perfectly singed thin-crust pizzas topped with local charcuterie, as well as grilled meats and fish.

### WHAT TO DO **Marché Central d'Ajaccio**

Boulevard du Roi Jérôme. Ajaccio's main outdoor market, a warren of tented stalls in the center of town near the port, offers a thorough introduction to Corsican ingredients and foodstuffs, especially artisanal cheeses and charcuterie. The city's main fish market is in a public hall just steps away, on the quai Napoléon.



## Fasgioli Incu Funghi

(White Beans with Dried Mushrooms)  
SERVES 6-8

This simple bean stew (pictured on page 39) is typical of Corsica's flavorful, unpretentious fare.

- ½ oz. dried porcini mushrooms
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, minced
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 8 oz. dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 1 15-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes in juice, crushed
- 2 bay leaves
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Soak mushrooms in 4 cups boiling water in a bowl until soft, about 20 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer mushrooms to a cutting board; finely chop. Slowly pour soaking liquid into a large measuring cup until you have 3 cups, making sure to leave any sediment in bottom of bowl; discard sediment. Set soaking liquid and mushrooms aside.

2 Heat oil in a 4-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add garlic and onion; cook until soft, about 6 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Add reserved soaking liquid and mushrooms, beans, stock, tomatoes, and bay leaves; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, 2½-3 hours. Season with salt and pepper before serving.

## Fiadone

(Corsican-Style Cheesecake)  
SERVES 12

Typically made with *brocciu*, a fresh goat's or ewe's milk cheese, this rustic cake (pictured on page 34) works just as well with ricotta.

- 8 eggs
- 1½ cups sugar
- 2 lb. *brocciu* or ricotta
- 2 tbsp. lemon zest
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- Butter, for greasing

Heat oven to 350°. Whisk eggs and sugar in a bowl until pale and lightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Add cheese, zest, vanilla, and salt; whisk until smooth. Pour into a greased 9" x 13" glass baking dish, and bake until barely set in the middle, about 35 minutes. Transfer to broiler and broil on high until browned, about 2

minutes; let cool before cutting into squares to serve.

## Frittata Incu u Brocciu a Menta

(Fresh Cheese and Mint Omelet)  
SERVES 4

Fresh mint gives this cheese omelet (pictured on page 32) a floral flavor. Serve it with grilled bread and a green salad for a light meal.

- 1 cup ricotta
- ¼ cup roughly chopped mint
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 6 eggs
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. olive oil

Heat broiler to high. Whisk cheese, mint, chile flakes, eggs, and salt and pepper in a bowl until smooth. Heat oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add egg mixture; cook until bottom is set but top is still runny, about 5 minutes. Transfer to broiler; broil until lightly browned on top, about 30 seconds.

## Mousse au Citron

(Lemon Mousse)  
SERVES 8-10

This creamy lemon dessert (pictured on page 37) showcases the fruit's flavor beautifully.

- 8 eggs
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- Juice and zest of 4 lemons
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 Whisk together 4 eggs, 4 yolks (reserve remaining whites), and 1 cup sugar in a 4-qt. saucepan. Add salt and juice and zest; stir until smooth. Place saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring, until mixture thickens to the consistency of loose pudding, about 10 minutes. Pour through a fine strainer into a large bowl, and chill.

2 Whisk egg whites and remaining sugar in a bowl until stiff peaks form; add to curd. Fold gently until combined; set aside. Whisk cream and vanilla in a bowl until stiff peaks form; add to curd mixture. Fold until combined. Spoon mousse into serving cups; chill before serving.

## Pasta Incu Bietulle

(Swiss Chard Cannelloni)  
SERVES 8

Fresh pasta, whether homemade or bought, is ideal for these hearty cannelloni (pictured on page 39), baked

in zesty tomato sauce.

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 12 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large yellow onion, minced
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 cups chicken stock
- ¼ cup finely chopped basil
- 2 tbsp. minced thyme leaves
- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes in juice, crushed
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1½ lb. Swiss chard, leaves separated and stems chopped
- 2 cups ricotta
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped mint
- 16 5" x 7" fresh pasta sheets
- 4 oz. mozzarella or fontina

1 Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add ⅔ of the garlic and onion; cook until soft, about 8 minutes. Add tomato paste and chile flakes; cook until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Add stock, basil, thyme, tomatoes, bay leaf, and salt and pepper; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring occasionally to meld flavors, about 20 minutes. Remove bay leaf, and purée sauce; set aside.

2 Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add chard leaves and stems; cook until tender, about 2 minutes. Drain, and transfer to a kitchen towel; twist into a ball, squeezing tightly, to drain any excess water. Finely chop leaves and stems, and transfer to a bowl along with remaining garlic, cheese, mint, and salt and pepper; mix well, and set filling aside.

3 Heat oven to 425°. Place about ⅓ cup filling near the short end of one pasta sheet. Starting at that short end, roll sheet into a cylinder around filling; repeat with remaining filling and sheets. Spread half the sauce in the bottom of a 9" x 13" baking dish; place pasta cylinders into dish, creating a single, snug layer. Cover with remaining sauce, and grate mozzarella over top; cover dish with foil. Bake until pasta is cooked through, about 35 minutes. Transfer to broiler, and broil on high until cheese is browned, about 2 minutes.

## Strozzapreti

(Swiss Chard and Cheese Dumplings)  
SERVES 4

In Corsica, these herb-packed cheese dumplings (pictured on page 33) showcase the wild greens of the island and make a great starter course to a summer meal.

- 2 bunches Swiss chard (about 2 lbs.), stemmed
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 1 lb. ricotta, drained overnight, 1¼ cups reserved
- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- ⅓ cup finely chopped mint
- ¼ cup flour, plus more
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 4 egg yolks
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add chard leaves; cook until tender, about 2 minutes. Drain, and transfer to a kitchen towel; twist into a ball, squeezing tightly, to drain excess water. Finely chop, and transfer to a bowl along with 1 tsp. salt, 1¼ cups ricotta (save remaining for another use), 8 tbsp. butter, mint, flour, oregano, yolks, garlic, and pepper. Using 2 spoons, divide and shape mixture into about twelve 2-oz. oval dumplings; dust with flour. Transfer dumplings to a baking sheet, and freeze 30 minutes.

2 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add dumplings; cook until tender, 4-6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer dumplings to bowls. Heat remaining butter in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat until lightly browned, about 5 minutes; whisk in juice and salt and pepper. Drizzle over dumplings before serving.

## Torta Pisticcina

(Chestnut Flour Tart)  
SERVES 8-10

The star of this almond-studded tart (pictured on page 31) is the flour from Corsica's prized crop, chestnuts.

- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing pan
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- Zest of ½ orange
- 2 cups chestnut flour
- ½ cup whole blanched almonds
- ¼ cup sliced almonds

Heat oven to 375°. Grease a 10" cake pan; set aside. Whisk butter, sugar, milk, vanilla, salt, and zest in a bowl. Add flour and whole almonds; stir until smooth. Pour batter into pan; sprinkle with sliced almonds. Bake until browned and set, about 25 minutes.



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# AMERICA

*The artisan bread movement has changed the course*

*loaves possible for professional and hobbyist bakers alike.*



Feature

# N B R E A D

Three golden-brown baguettes are arranged horizontally on a light-colored wooden surface. The baguettes are slightly tapered and have a visible airy crumb structure. The top baguette is the most prominent, followed by the middle one, and then the bottom one. The lighting creates soft shadows to the right of each loaf.

*of baking in this country, making ever more delicious*

BY WILLIAM ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN

Four-hour baguettes (see page 52 for a recipe).

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**I WAS** at a French conversation class recently, and a poor soul who didn't speak the language, having been dragged there by his wife, had taken refuge in the back row. The teacher asked each of us to introduce ourselves, and when my turn came I said, in my fractured French, that I enjoyed baking bread. ✂ "Pain au levain?" came a voice from

the back of the classroom.

"You speak French?" another student said in disbelief.

"Not a word. But bread I know!"

That's when I realized the artisan bread movement had arrived.

I'd had my own bread epiphany a few years earlier at the unlikelyst of venues, a hotel breakfast, where the bread basket presaged its arrival with an aroma that wafted across the room, almost leading me by the nose, cartoonlike, into the kitchen. To someone who'd grown up on presliced, cellophane-wrapped, bleached-white products whose very blandness was their selling point, this bread was unlike anything I'd ever tasted. The dark-brown caramelized crust defied physics by being crisp and chewy at the same time. It was a crust to be eaten slowly, first with the teeth, then with the tongue. The bread clinging to the crust was every bit as good. It wasn't white, wasn't whole wheat; it was something in between and had a rustic quality—a coarse texture that, while managing to be light and airy with plenty of holes, also had real substance. When you bit into it, it bit back. It was an utter surprise, an almost-mystical revelation, that bread could be this good.

DANIEL LEADER HAD a similar reaction when he discovered artisan bread as a young American chef visiting Paris in the late 1970s. "It was like hearing music that you liked for the first time," is how he described the moment 30 years later when I

visited him at the main location for his Bread Alone bakeries, in Boiceville, New York. Leader learned to make bread through what he calls the "back-door school of baking," knocking on the rear entrances of his favorite Parisian bakeries at two in the morning and asking if he could come in, watch, and learn. By 1983, he'd decided to leave the New York restaurant scene behind, on the gamble that Americans would appreciate—and pay a little more for—the kind of handcrafted loaves he'd experienced in Europe.

Coincidentally, in the same year Bread Alone opened, Steve Sullivan, a rhetoric major at the University of California, Berkeley, who'd bused tables at Chez Panisse before becoming the restaurant's in-house baker, founded Acme Bread Company, introducing just four varieties of European loaves and garnering rave reviews. With Leader firing the ovens on the East Coast and Sullivan on the West, and others starting to follow their lead, what had begun as a few iconoclasts pursuing personal visions started to look like a movement. By the early 1990s, brick ovens and sourdough loaves were popping up all over America.

Leader says he wasn't aware of being part of a movement; he just wanted to make good bread. Industrial baking—from the steel roller mills that stripped the grain of its bran, nutrients, and flavor, to the chemical additives required to stabilize the roughly handled, mechanically whipped dough—had turned bread into an industrialized, mass-produced commodity over the past

century. Leader's objectives virtually amount to a definition of what we call artisan bread today: "We wanted to use organic flour. We wanted to make simple, European-style hearth breads. We wanted them to be baked in brick ovens, using old-world recipes. We wanted to use sourdough. And we wanted to make them by hand."

So did I. Following my own bread awakening, I was determined to reproduce that simple (only four ingredients: flour, water, yeast, and salt) yet complex (one of them is alive!) country bread, or *pain de campagne*. But would artisan bread be out of reach for the average home cook, much like sous-vide cooking and molecular gastronomy? An hour south of Leader's bakery, at my home in upstate New York, I was about to find out, having begun my "52 Loaves" project (which I ended up chronicling in a book of the same name), pledging to bake a loaf of country bread every week for a year until I'd reproduced the sublime object of my desire.

Certainly I faced some challenges. I was a writer, not even an amateur baker. I knew nothing about bread, yeast, fermentation, or flour, which was apparent to anyone brave enough to taste my initial loaves. So I bought books, lots of books. I visited local artisan bakers, a yeast factory, a mill. Yet the more I learned, the more daunting my task appeared: How to duplicate a commercial oven's steam injectors, which delay crust formation and allow the dough to achieve its full "oven spring," that dramatic burst of rise caused by carbon dioxide pressure and heat in the first minutes of baking? I stuck the nozzle of my houseplant mister into the oven and gave a dozen hearty squeezes, the last one scoring a direct hit on the oven light, sending shards of glass into my loaf.

My hunger for (continued on page 50)

WILLIAM ALEXANDER is the author of *52 Loaves: A Half-Baked Adventure (Workman, 2010)*. This is his first article for *SAVEUR*.



1492



1800s



1849



1869

**BREAD IN AMERICA** **1492** Legend has it Christopher Columbus brings a small crock of sourdough starter to the New World. Unleavened breads made from cornmeal, however, go on to be the first breads embraced by European settlers in the Americas. **1602** Eighteen years before the arrival of the Mayflower, British sea captain Bartholomew Gosnold plants the country's first wheat crop in Massachusetts. Within a century, amber waves of grain grow from Maryland to New England. **1800s** Home bakers start baking bread in tins, rather than casting their formed loaves onto the floor of brick ovens. **1849** Boudin Bakery in San Francisco opens its doors and begins producing the first San Francisco sourdough using a starter borrowed from local goldminers; the bakery still uses the same starter today. **1869** Harvard chemist Eben Horsford perfects his invention of baking powder, a blend of monocalcium phosphate, sodium bicarbonate, and starch that allows breads to rise without starters and enables home bakers to add quick breads like banana bread and Irish soda bread to their repertoires. »





Employee Sonam Norbu holds two sourdough loaves at Bread Alone in Boiceville, New York.



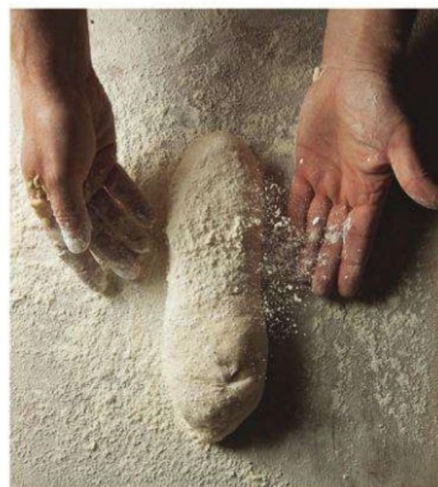
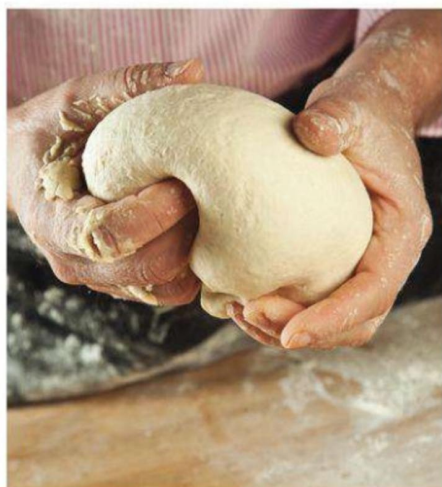
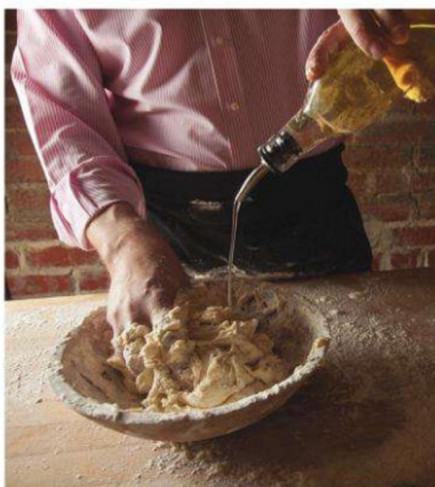
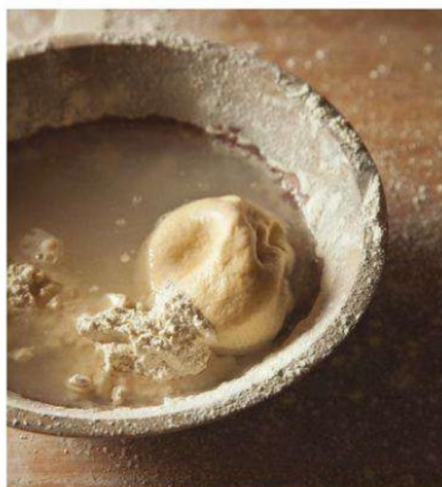
## FILONE

This recipe, from Daniel Leader of *Bread Alone*, which has several locations in upstate New York, produces an airy loaf with a nice crust (pictured at right) similar to a ciabatta. It's made with a lightly fermented traditional Italian starter, called a *biga*, that's started nine hours before baking.

1 2/3 cups (13 1/4 oz.) tap water, heated to 115°  
1 1/2 tsp. (1/4 oz.) active dry yeast

3 1/4 cups plus 2/3 cup (1 lb. 1 2/3 oz.) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting  
1/3 cup (2 2/3 oz.) olive oil, plus more

for greasing bowl  
2 1/4 tsp. (3/4 oz.) kosher salt  
1/2 cup ice cubes



**1** In a medium bowl, whisk together 1/3 cup water and 1/2 tsp. yeast; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Add 2/3 cup flour, and mix until a smooth dough forms. Transfer to a lightly floured surface, and knead until fairly smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer the ball of dough to a greased bowl, and cover with plastic wrap. Place bowl in a cold oven, and let sit for 1 hour; transfer bowl to refrigerator, and let sit for at least 8 hours or up to 24 hours to ferment. This ball of dough is the *biga*, a quick and simple starter that imparts large bubbles and a lightly fermented flavor to the dough. Remove *biga* from refrigerator, and let sit to come to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

**2** Transfer *biga* to a large bowl and add remaining 1 1/3 cups water and 1 tsp. yeast (pictured, top left); stir until *biga* breaks up and is partly dissolved in water. Add remaining 3 1/4 cups flour, along with oil and salt (pictured, top middle), and stir until dough forms. Let the dough sit to allow flour to hydrate, about 20 minutes (the term for this process is called autolysis).

**3** Knead dough, which will be very wet and sticky, in the bowl until it begins to tighten and becomes smooth, about 4 minutes. (The dough for this bread must be very wet to achieve its light and airy texture.) Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface, and continue kneading (pictured, top right), using a bench scraper to help if necessary, until smooth and elastic, about 6 minutes more. At this point, the dough will be sticky to the touch but will release from your hands fairly easily. It will also have formed a tight skin on the outside that can hold its shape when stretched lightly (pictured, bottom left).

**4** Transfer the dough ball to a lightly greased bowl, and cover it with plastic wrap. Place the bowl in a cold oven, and let the dough rest until it doubles in size, about 2

hours. (When you press your finger into the dough, the fingerprint should spring back slowly. Lightly dust a sheet of parchment paper with flour, and set it on a rimless baking sheet.)

**5** Lightly dust a work surface with flour, and transfer dough to work surface. Using a bench scraper or a chef's knife, cut dough into two equal-sized pieces, and flatten slightly. Fold the top and bottom edges of one piece toward the middle, and flatten dough at the seam with the palm of your hand (pictured, bottom middle); turn dough over, seam side down, and shape into a 12" log. Transfer log to the prepared, floured parchment paper, and repeat this folding and shaping procedure with remaining dough piece. Lift the parchment paper between the loaves slightly. Loosely cover dough logs on baking sheet with plastic wrap, and transfer to a cold oven; let sit until dough logs double in size, about 90 minutes. (Because the temperature in kitchens can vary wildly, thus speeding up or slowing down a dough's rise, placing the dough in a cold oven keeps the temperature more constant.)

**6** Remove proofed loaves on baking sheet from oven, and place a cast-iron skillet on the bottom rack of oven; position another rack above skillet, and place a baking stone on top of it. Heat oven to 425°.

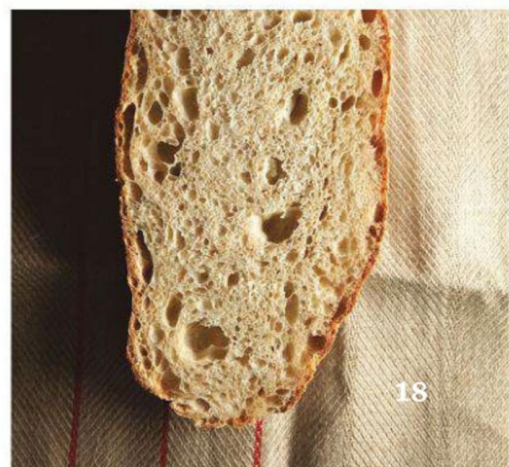
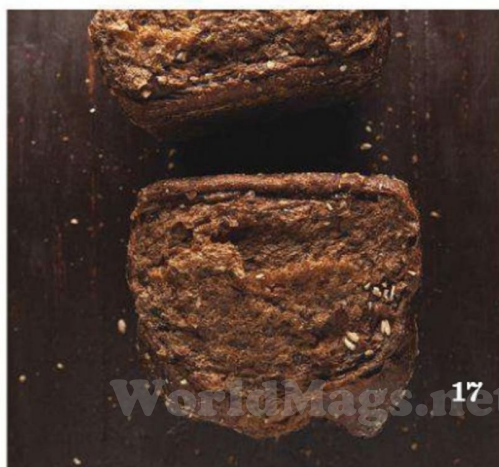
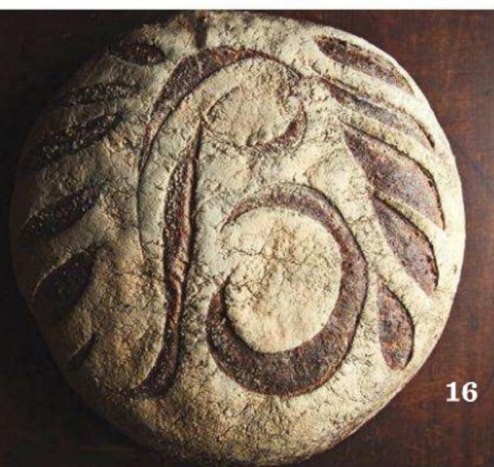
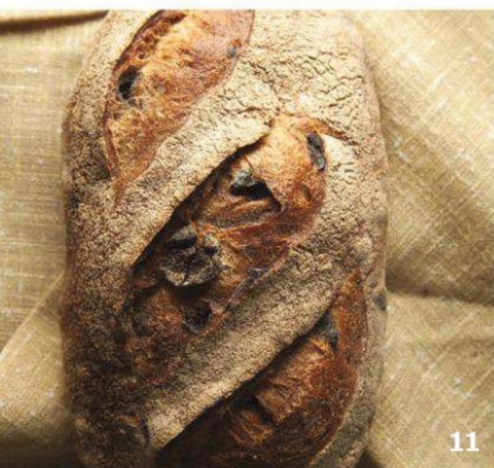
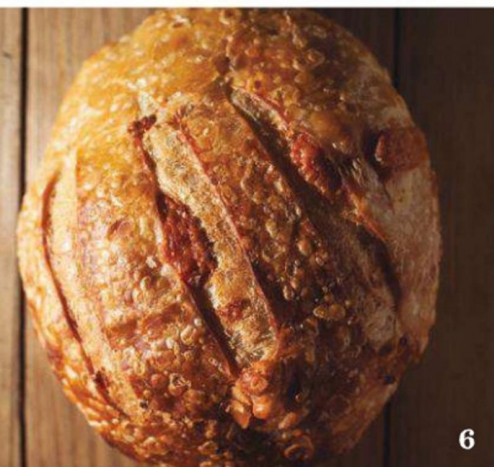
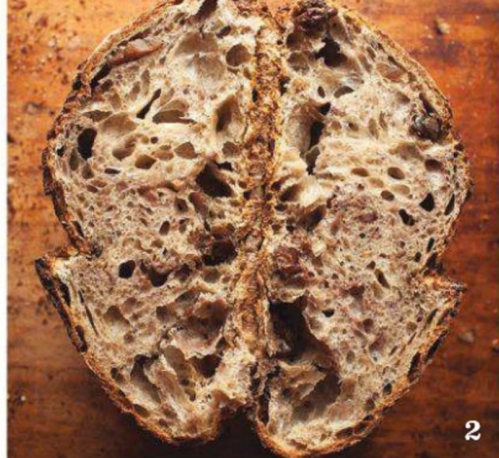
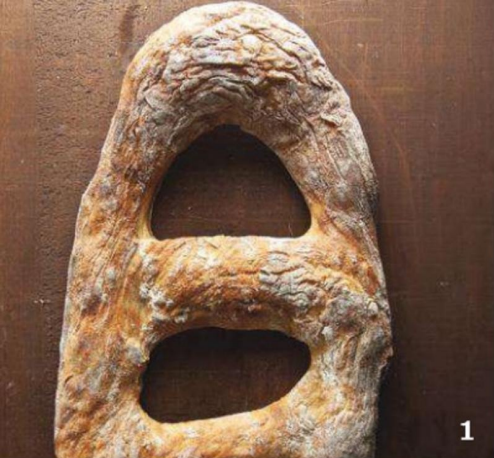
**7** Uncover dough logs, and sprinkle with flour (pictured, bottom right); this looks aesthetically pleasing and adds another dimension of flavor from the toasted flour. Using the corner of the parchment paper as a guide, slide the loaves, still on the paper, onto the baking stone; and position evenly on the stone. Place ice cubes in skillet (this produces steam that allows the loaves to rise fully before a crust forms on the exterior). Bake loaves until dark golden brown and crisp, about 50 minutes; let cool before serving.





Filone, an airy Italian loaf (see recipe at left).









4



5



9



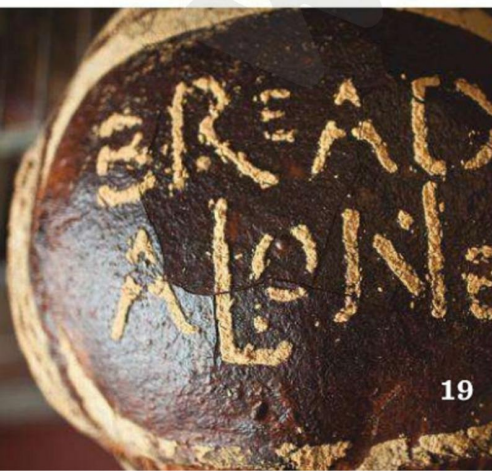
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15



19



20

## 20 LOAVES WE LOVE

1. The hand-shaped, wood-fired **potato-thyme fougasse** from Hungry Ghost Bakery in Northampton, Massachusetts, has a pillowy texture reminiscent of focaccia and a wonderfully herbaceous taste.

2. With a moist crumb and pronounced crust, Tartine's **country bread** is the gold standard for artisan loaves in San Francisco and beyond. Remarkable.

3. Iggy's in Boston makes one of our favorite sandwich breads, the fluffy and pliant **pan Francese**.

4. The **seeded fougasse** at Standard Baking Company in Portland, Maine, tastes like the best everything bagel on earth: chewy, fragrant, great with good butter.

5. Keith Kouris's two Long Island Blue Duck bakeries feature a vast range of international breads, but their dense **Finnish-style sour rye** is our favorite, particularly with a ripe, creamy cheese.

6. Think of the heavenly, crisp caramelized cheese atop a casserole; that's what the **Asiago-Parmesan** bread by Lionel Vatinet at La Farm in Cary, North Carolina, tastes like.

7. The fragrant **rye ficelle** Zachary Golper makes at his year-old Brooklyn bakery Bien Cuit is worth the trip to the borough.

8. Of all the creative loaves at Santa Monica's Milo + Olive, the **cinnamon sugar brioché** is our favorite. Think French toast.

9. The wood-fired, earthy-tasting **country blond boule** at Ken Forkish's 11-year-old Portland, Oregon, bakery has the perfect crumb-to-chew ratio.

10. Edmund and Kathleen Weber bake this rustic air-pocked **pumpkin seed campagna** at their Petaluma, California bakery, Della Fattoria.

11. The moist, briny **three-olive bâtard** from Seven Stars in Providence, Rhode Island, is the platonic ideal of this style.

12. Long fermentation is the key to the fine flavor of this **epi baguette**, from Pain D'Avignon in New York City.

13. We're crazy about Berkshire Mountain Bakery's **Bread and Chocolate**, a sour-dough boule studded with bittersweet Callebaut chunks.

14. The amply charred, smoky **truccione saré** from Sullivan Street Bakery in New York City embodies baker Jim Lahey's classic-but-creative style.

15. Acme's organic **walnut levain** is our favorite loaf from the seminal bakery in Berkeley, California.

16. The chewy **pain de seigle**, a wheat-and-rye sourdough boule from Balthazar in New York City, just might be the perfect table bread.

W For a slideshow of more loaves we love, go to [SAVEUR.COM/BREAD](http://SAVEUR.COM/BREAD)

17. The chewy, aromatic **Russian pumpernickel** at 86-year-old Manhattan stalwart Orwasher's is old-world perfection, and our choice for a pastrami sandwich. (We also love their chardonnay miche, made with grape yeast.)

18. Gerard Rubaud, a French baker in Vermont, mills the flour for his insanely delicious **organic levain**.

19. The slightly tangy, rugged **whole wheat sourdough** from New York's Bread Alone makes a stellar PB&J.

20. The fresh local flour used at Grand Central Bakery in Seattle and Portland is one reason the airy **Como** loaf (perfect for bruschetta) is so insanely delicious. —Meryl Rosofsky and Alex Rush



(continued from page 44) knowledge often outstripped my common sense. To simulate the thermodynamic properties of a ten-ton wood-fired brick oven, I dug up hundreds of pounds of the heavy clay soil in my yard and turned it into an earthen oven. Then I spent the next three months in physical therapy, the disks in my lower back having lost to the clay. And since I'd realized, with some embarrassment, that I actually didn't know what flour was—that is, how wheat went from being a golden, tall grass to the white stuff in the bag—I grew, harvested, threshed, winnowed, and ground my own wheat, all by hand, something so rarely done today that the source I relied on for advice was Pliny the Elder.

As I continued to bake, week after week, 20, then 30 disappointing loaves, the honey-combed, open-celled crumb structure I craved continued to elude me. I'd ignored (or perhaps disbelieved) Leader's advice in his book *Local Breads* (W.W. Norton, 2007): "If I could convince you of just one thing about making bread, it would be how little effort it takes to cultivate a sourdough," otherwise known as a *levain*, a mother—or simply, a starter. But when Charlie Van Over, a semiretired baker living in Chester, Connecticut, forced upon me a container of his 12-year-old sourdough, explaining, "to go to the next level, you have to use a levain," I had no choice but to try.

Until then I, like most home bakers, had been using commercial yeast to leaven my bread. Flatbread, essentially flour and water cooked on a hot stone, dates to the Paleolithic era, but it was the ancient Egyptians who discovered that if you added some yeast—and there was plenty of that around, since they were accomplished brewers—the dough would rise into a loaf. Some 6,000 years would pass before Louis Pasteur would unlock the secret why, and it's really quite simple and beautiful: Living yeast, when fed sugar, produces carbon dioxide and alcohol, the process we call fermentation. Meanwhile, flour, in the presence of water,

## BREAD SCIENCE

Making bread is simple, but professional bakers use a lot of complicated jargon that can seem overwhelming to novices. These terms, however, help explain the scientific processes at work when making artisan bread; they can also help home bakers understand what to expect each step of the way. First, there's the **starter**, often called a *levain* (in French), a *lievito madre* (in Italian), or a mother, starter seed, or sourdough starter in English. Starters are made by mixing flour in water to form a pasty mixture; over time the mixture will sour by the process of fermentation as it picks up natural yeasts from the air. As with any fermented food (cheese, wine, pickles, etc.), time, temperature, and humidity can greatly affect how a starter looks on any given day or how a finished loaf turns out. When you're ready to bake, a portion of your starter is mixed with some fresh flour and water to form a **sourdough culture** that further ferments, thereby deepening the flavor, for up to 24 hours. This sourdough culture is then combined with more flour and water to make your dough. It's this two-step process of fermentation that's responsible for artisan bread's characteristic, and pleasant, tang. An ideal temperature for feeding your starters and fermenting your sourdough is about 75°, but since home kitchens vary wildly in temperature, we advise letting your starters, sourdoughs, and bread doughs ferment and rise in a cold oven, which keeps a constant temperature that's slightly above room temperature. (Like many professional bakers, we also add a touch of commercial yeast to our wild yeast sourdoughs, just to ensure a good rise.) The stage where you let a dough rise is called **proofing**, and it's so named because you're allowing the yeast to "prove" it's alive by raising the dough. If dough doesn't rise, or proof, long enough, your bread will be dense. The yeast will not have produced enough bubbles, or air pockets, the result of yeast emitting carbon dioxide and alcohol as it metabolizes the sugars in the flour. There is also a stage before kneading dough when you let the just-mixed ingredients rest for 20 minutes to let the flour hydrate in the wet ingredients; this is called **autolysis** and it's helpful in producing a smooth, evenly crumbed final product. If you don't let the flour fully hydrate before kneading, there can be small pockets of raw flour in your dough. —Ben Mims

produces those long, tangled protein chains called gluten. Kneading stretches the coils out, aligning them side by side so that they can bond, forming the strong elastic network that enables the dough to stretch and capture the carbon dioxide gases emitted by the yeast. What wonderful choreography! Subtract any one dancer, and the ballet falls apart.

The commercial yeast I'd been using was providing plenty of carbon dioxide, but not much else. For flavor and texture, Van Over explained, you need to use yeast that's been around the block a few times; that is, some type of prefermented dough, or starter, made with wild yeast gathered from the air. Wild yeast belongs to a different species from cultivated yeast, and a mature starter contains bacteria and hundreds of organic compounds, which provide the signature taste and smell we identify with freshly baked artisan bread.

The next loaf was easily my best—and tastiest—so far. Another lesson came by chance

when, stuck in a summer vacation rental without my stand mixer, I was forced to knead by hand. I let the dough rest before kneading, a process known to bakers as autolysis, and found that not only did this loaf have a more open crumb with more flavor, but I'd enjoyed kneading with my hands and had known by feel when the dough was ready. I would never use my mixer again. Before the year was out I'd learn how to create steam (by pouring a cup of water into an old cast-iron frying pan placed on the bottom rack of the oven) and how a long, cool fermentation (in the coolest part of the house, or even the refrigerator) draws out the flavor of dough before the bread is baked. I'd learn how to turn an electric oven into a hearth (by preheating a hefty pizza stone at the oven's highest setting for an hour and a half before putting in my dough). I'd even make (continued on page 55)

Don Lewis's hands covered in freshly milled flour at Wild Hive Farm in Clinton Corners, New York.



1873



1868



1928



1930

» **1873** French-American Edmond LaCroix improves upon the Swiss steel roller, a flour mill that efficiently separates wheat's germ and bran from the white endosperm. The result is a new and very popular refined white flour; 40 years later, millers start bleaching flour using nitrogen peroxide to make flour an even brighter shade of white. **1868** The Fleischmann brothers create America's first commercially produced yeast, a cake of compressed grain, barley malt, and brewer's yeast. By the start of the 20th century, bread recipes are calling for commercial yeast instead of natural starters made with wild yeasts. **1928** The Chillicothe Baking Company in Missouri is the first to sell sliced bread to the American public, using a bread slicer invented by Iowan Otto Rohwedder. Two years later, Wonder Bread becomes America's first nationally distributed sliced bread. **1941** During World War II, the National Research Council asks the bread and milling industries to add 8 nutrients to their flour and bread to prevent wartime malnutrition. To this day, bread is enriched with such vitamins and minerals as thiamin, folic acid, and calcium. »







## FOUR-HOUR BAGUETTE

Traditional baguettes (pictured on page 42) are 24 to 30 inches long and are baked in ovens that produce steam, which delays crust formation so the loaves can fully rise. This recipe reduces the length to fit in home ovens and calls for adding ice cubes to a hot cast-iron skillet to create steam.

1½ cups (12 oz.) tap water, heated to 115°  
1 tsp. (⅛ oz.) active dry yeast

3¼ cups (14 ⅔ oz.) all-purpose flour  
1½ tsp. (⅔ oz.) kosher salt  
Canola oil, for greasing bowl

½ cup ice cubes



1 Whisk together water and yeast in a large bowl; let sit until yeast is foamy, about 10 minutes. Add flour, and stir with a fork until dough forms and all flour is absorbed; let dough sit to allow flour to hydrate, about 20 minutes. Add salt (pictured, far left); transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface, and knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Transfer dough ball to a lightly greased bowl; cover bowl with plastic wrap, and place bowl in a cold oven. Let dough rest until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.

2 Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface, and shape into an 8" x 6" rectangle. Fold the 8" sides toward the middle (pictured, second from left), then fold the shorter sides toward the center. Return dough, seam side down, to bowl. Cover with plastic again, and return to oven; let sit until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

3 Remove bowl with dough from oven, and place a cast-iron skillet on the bottom rack of oven; position another rack above skillet, and place a baking stone on it.

4 Heat oven to 475°. Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface, and cut into three equal pieces; shape each piece into a 14" rope (pictured, second from right). Flour a sheet of parchment paper on a rimless baking sheet; place ropes, evenly spaced, on paper. Lift paper between ropes to form pleats; place two tightly rolled kitchen towels under long edges of paper, creating supports for the loaves. Cover loosely with plastic wrap; let sit until it doubles in size, about 50 minutes.

5 Uncover; remove towels, and flatten paper to space out loaves. Using a sharp razor or paring knife, slash the top of each baguette at a 30-degree angle in four spots (pictured, far right); each slash should be about 4" long. Using the corner of the parchment paper as a guide, slide the loaves, still on the parchment paper, onto the baking stone. Place ice cubes in skillet (this produces steam that lets the loaves rise fully before a crust forms). Bake the baguettes until darkly browned and crisp, about 30 minutes; cool before serving.

## SEEDED RYE LOAF

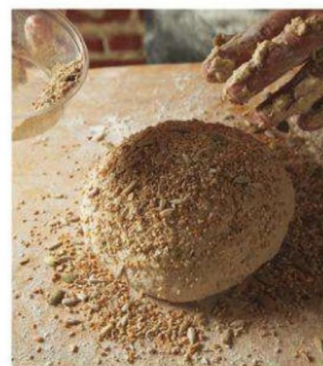
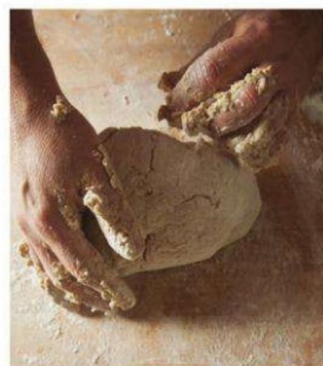
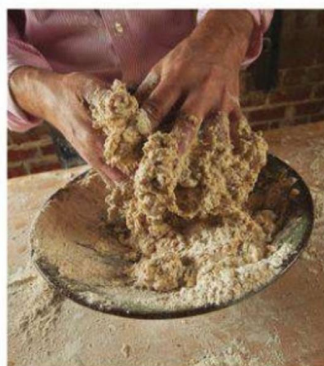
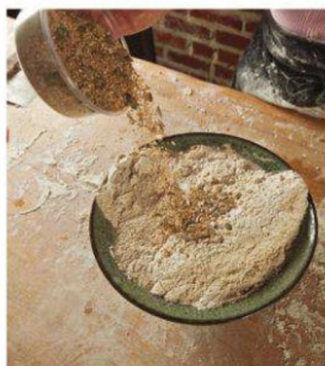
Dark and deeply flavored from a rye sourdough starter that's made 10 days in advance, this earthy loaf (pictured at right) is easily customizable depending on what seeds and grains you have on hand and want to add to the dough.

6 cups (16 oz.) rye flour  
3¼ cups plus ⅓ cup (1 lb. 12 ⅔ oz.) tap water, heated to 115°

¼ tsp. active dry yeast  
2¼ cups (12 ⅓ oz.) bread flour  
1½ tsp. (⅔ oz.) kosher salt

Canola oil, for greasing bowl  
¼ cup each sunflower, pumpkin, or sesame seeds, cracked

wheat or rye (any combination), mixed together in a bowl  
½ cup ice cubes



1 In a bowl, stir ½ cup rye flour, ¼ cup water, and yeast until a smooth paste forms. Cover with plastic wrap, and let sit for 24 hours. Repeat this process for the next eight days, adding the same amounts of rye flour and water, to make starter (which you can keep alive, in the fridge, by adding the same amounts once weekly.)

2 On 10th day, place ¼ cup starter in a bowl. Stir in ½ cup rye flour and ⅓ cup water until smooth to create sourdough culture for this loaf. Let sit for 8–24 hours.

3 Uncover culture, and add remaining 1 cup rye flour and ⅓ cup water, along with bread flour, salt, and half the seed mix (pictured, far left). Stir until dough forms (pictured, second from left); let dough sit for 20 minutes. Transfer to a floured work surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes (pictured, second from right). Transfer to a greased bowl; cover with plastic wrap. Place in a cold oven; let sit until slightly inflated, about 1 hour. Transfer to a work surface and flatten. Fold

top and bottom edges toward middle. Return dough to bowl, seam side down; cover, and return to oven. Let sit until doubled in size, about 3 hours.

4 Transfer dough to surface. Positioning your hands on outside edge of dough, rotate dough over surface to form a taut dome, pinching edges underneath. Transfer, seam side up, to a floured kitchen towel in a colander. Cover loosely with plastic wrap; let sit until doubled in size, about 3 hours. One hour before baking, place a cast-iron skillet on bottom rack of oven; position another rack above skillet; place a baking stone on top of it. Heat to 400°.

5 Invert dough onto a parchment paper sheet on a rimless baking sheet. Spray with water, and cover with remaining seed mix (pictured, far right). Using a razor, slash a hash tag pattern in top of dough. Using paper, slide loaf onto stone. Place ice in skillet. Bake until dark brown, about 1 hour; let cool before serving.





Slices of seeded rye (see recipe  
at left).





Loaves of spelt *levain* (see page 56 for a recipe).



# CHOOSING FLOUR

The main ingredient in bread not only affects the loaf's flavor: it also helps determine its texture, appearance, moisture content, and nutritional quality. One major difference between the many kinds of wheat flours available is protein content, which affects just how easily gluten—those stretchy strands in dough that ultimately form bread's interior crumb—is made; the more protein in the flour, the more easily gluten forms. **All-purpose flour** works fine for baking airy breads, like baguettes. Usually a blend of hard and soft wheats, it has a lower protein content than **bread flour**, which is made with protein-rich hard wheat (ideal for making sturdy rustic loaves). **Whole wheat flour** is also high in protein; ground with the wheat germ and bran intact, it has a darker color, more pronounced flavor, and more vitamins and minerals. Bread can also be made with flours milled from other cereal grains, with their own special characteristics. **Rye flour**, for example, creates a sturdy loaf because it absorbs more water than wheat flour does, but it also attracts more natural yeasts, so it's great for making sourdough starters. **Spelt flour**, on the other hand, has a higher protein content than wheat flour but, interestingly, forms weak gluten, so spelt loaves tend to be denser, with a pronounced, nutty flavor. While it's certainly possible to bake artisan bread with commercial flours, many of the movement's bakers are interested in organic or stone-milled flours for a variety of reasons: no matter what the variety, they are fresher (which translates into more flavorful loaves); they have a higher protein content; and since they aren't bleached, they still include all the beneficial yeasts and flora, which make them well suited to natural sourdough starters. "One of the goals of commercial milling was to create a consistent product that wouldn't vary," says Don Lewis, owner of Wild Hive Farm in Clinton Corners, New York, which mills many varieties of wheat and grain, including many heirlooms that haven't been grown in the region since industrial milling took over. "But flour changes from season to season and place to place." The hard red winter wheat Wild Hive mills primarily for bread flour, for example, tends to be harder—or contain more protein—than hard red spring wheat, and bakers have to subtly change their recipes to adapt to the differences. It's a small sacrifice to make for the beautifully round, earthy flavors of freshly milled flours. —Dana Bowen

(continued from page 50) my own local *levain* from the wild yeasts in the air. In short, I would become an artisan baker.

MANY OF THE well-known artisan bakeries that followed Leader's and Sullivan's footsteps during those heady early days have since closed, sold out to multinational corporations or, some say, lost their artisan ways, shipping par-baked, frozen loaves to supermarkets—perhaps the biggest threat to small bakeries yet. But the genuine artisan movement is still growing and, after some quiet years, suddenly getting a lot of attention again. Why now?

Leader attributes the phenomenon to the interest in local foods. "Back then," he says, "we were almost treated as a food fad. But now bread is part of the discussion with cheese, and wine, and vegetables. Now we're a piece of that puzzle." Another crucial piece of that puzzle is the newfound interest in locally grown wheat, spelt, and other grains (see "Choosing Flour," above). The Maine Grain Alliance's Kneading

Conference, which promotes the revival of small-grain farming and artisan bread baking, is in its sixth year, having proved so popular with everyone from home bakers to farmers that it added a West Coast edition this year.

Leader uses at least 15 percent New York State wheat in all his breads. Like many artisan bakers, he'd like to use more, but there are challenges. "There's a reason why most of the wheat comes from the Midwest," he explains. "It's economical to grow, the conditions are optimal, and it's consistently good wheat, so good that some of it ends up in baguettes in France." Local wheat also faces a distribution and processing hurdle. The great railroad lines were built in the 1800s to bring Midwestern wheat to the back doors of Eastern mills. No such infrastructure exists for the new, smaller farms scattered around the country. Finally, the volume of flour that a large artisan bakery like Bread Alone uses—1.4 million pounds annually—would challenge even the largest local farms. Yet Leader is hopeful about the future

of both the artisan-bread and local-grain movements, and is putting his money where his optimism is: He's bringing a stone mill to his bakery to grind local wheat. In fact, he feels the two movements are inextricably linked. Farmers and millers need an outlet for their flour, and artisan bakers want to use more local grains. "It's a partnership," Leader says.

Nowhere is that partnership more apparent than at Wild Hive Farm in New York's Mid-Hudson Valley, where baker and miller Don Lewis has established close relationships with local farmers, who are growing wheat (including heritage varieties) in the region for the first time since the 1940s. A baker since 1983, Lewis began milling local grains in 2005 for his own retail bakery, but demand for stone-ground local grains has grown so rapidly that Wild Hive is producing 160 tons of flour annually. Three-quarters of that ends up in the loaves sold at Eataly, the New York City Italian-food emporium that's rooted in the ideology of Slow Food. (The original Eataly, in Turin, makes bread with flour harvested and milled in the surrounding Piemonte region.)

Lewis also ground 15 pounds of grain that I'd reaped from my little backyard wheat field after I'd tired of rubbing handfuls of kernels between two stones. That flour ended up in my 52nd loaf, baked in the earth oven on a frigid February day. Sitting in a lawn chair, drawn up close to the fire for warmth as a gentle snow fell, it seemed that what I was doing was a miracle, as much a miracle as fire itself. Seeds of grass, wild microorganisms, salt, and water were about to become bread, a food as natural as any on earth, yet paradoxically one that cannot exist without the intervention of humans. This synergy of mankind and nature is what I think makes bread the perfect, the archetypal food, and perhaps on some level our subconscious knows it. Maybe this, as much as anything, is the force behind the return of good bread. During all those years it was absent, we—our bodies, our souls, and maybe even our DNA—missed it. 🍞



1983



1986



1999



2007

» **1983** The American artisan bread movement blossoms when Steve Sullivan opens Acme Bread Company in Berkeley, California, and Daniel Leader opens Bread Alone in Boiceville, New York. Both use natural leaveners and wood-fired ovens. **1986** The Japanese company Matsushita invents the bread machine, a tabletop appliance that combines mixing, proofing, and baking. A decade later, sales reached \$400 million annually in the United States. **1999** Nancy Silverton begins distributing her Los Angeles-made La Brea Bakery breads nationwide to supermarkets. She's the first American to utilize par-baking, a technique that involves baking loaves until nearly done, flash freezing them, and shipping them to locations where they're baked and sold fresh. **2001** The Bakers and Confectionary Union Local 3 opens the Artisan Baking Center in Queens, New York; it's now an incubator for start-up bread businesses that sell the likes of Finnish rye ruis and hand-ground blue corn tortillas. **2007** The Maine Grain Alliance holds its first ever Kneading Conference, promoting the return to local grains and milling. »



## SPELT LEVAIN LOAF

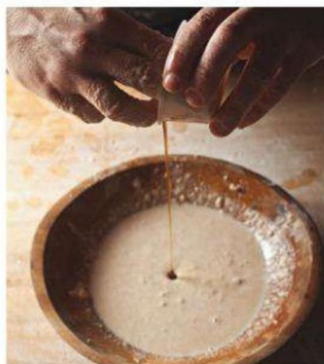
Made 10 days in advance with a hearty whole spelt flour starter, this loaf (pictured on page 54) has rich caramel undertones and a pleasant sourness. Top slices of this bread with creamy, funky cheeses and cured or smoked meats and fish.

6 3/4 cups plus 1/3 cup (2 lb. 4 2/3 oz.)  
whole spelt flour  
2 1/4 cups plus 1/3 cup (1 lb. 4 2/3 oz.)

tap water, heated to 115°  
1/4 tsp. active dry yeast  
3 tbsp. (1 3/4 oz.) honey

1 1/2 tsp. (3/8 oz.) kosher salt  
Canola oil, for greasing bowl  
All-purpose flour, for dusting

1/2 cup ice cubes



1 In a large container or bowl, stir together 2/3 cup spelt flour, 1/3 cup water, and yeast until a smooth paste forms; cover with plastic wrap, and let sit for 24 hours. Repeat this process for the next eight days, adding 1/3 cup plus 1 tbsp. spelt flour and 2 tbsp. water each day to make the starter (which you can keep alive, in the fridge, by adding the same amounts once weekly).

2 On the 10th day, place 1/4 cup starter in a large bowl and stir in 1/2 cup water (pictured, far left); add 1 cup spelt flour and stir until smooth to create the sourdough culture; let sit for 8–24 hours, until ready to bake.

3 Uncover sourdough culture and add remaining 2 3/4 cups spelt flour and 1 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. water, along with honey and salt (pictured, second from left), and stir with a fork until dough forms and all flour is absorbed. Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface, and knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Transfer dough ball to a lightly greased bowl; cover bowl with plastic wrap, and place bowl

in a cold oven. Let dough rest until doubled in size, about 3 hours.

4 Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface, and flatten slightly. Fold the top and bottom edges toward the middle (pictured, second from right), as if you were folding a letter; this action evenly distributes the air pockets so the bread will rise evenly. Place dough, seam side down, into a greased 8" x 5" x 2 1/2" loaf pan (pictured, far right); cover with plastic again, and return to oven. Let sit until doubled in size and dough reaches the top of the loaf pan, 2–3 hours. One hour before baking, remove loaf pan with dough from oven and place a cast-iron skillet on bottom rack. Position another rack above skillet and place a baking stone on it. Heat oven to 400°.

5 Lightly dust the top of loaf with all-purpose flour, and using a sharp razor or paring knife, slash the top of the loaf at a 30° angle in four spots; each slash should be about 4" long. Place loaf on baking stone; place ice cubes in skillet. Bake until dark brown and crisp, about 40 minutes; let cool before serving.

## APPLE CIDER LEVAIN LOAF

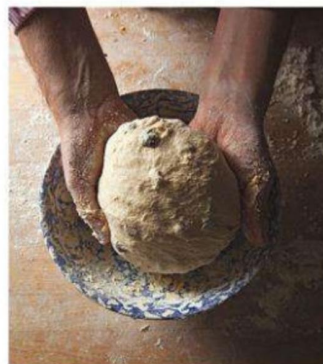
Tart and tangy with apple cider and dried cranberries, this flavorful, naturally leavened white bread (pictured at right) can also be made without those ingredients; simply substitute the same amount of water for the apple cider and omit the cranberries.

6 1/2 cups plus 1/3 cup (3 lb. 6 2/3 oz.)  
tap water, heated to 115°  
1/4 tsp. active dry yeast

4 3/4 cups plus 2/3 cup and 2 tbsp. (1  
lb. 9 1/3 oz.) all-purpose flour  
4 cups (1 lb. 4 oz.) bread flour

1 cup (8 oz.) apple cider, at room  
temperature  
1/2 cup (2 oz.) dried cranberries

2 tsp. (1/2 oz.) kosher salt  
Canola oil, for greasing  
cup ice cubes



1 In a large bowl, stir together 2/3 cup water, 1/4 cup plus 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour, and yeast until a smooth paste forms; cover with plastic wrap, and let sit for 24 hours. Repeat this process for the next eight days, adding 1/3 cup each water and flour the second and third days and 3/4 cup the remaining days, to make the starter (which you can keep alive, in the fridge, by adding the same amounts once weekly).

2 On the 10th day, place 1/4 cup starter in a bowl and stir in 1/3 cup water, 3/4 cup bread flour, and 1/4 cup apple cider to create sourdough culture (pictured, far left); let sit for 12–24 hours, until ready to bake.

3 Uncover culture and add remaining 2/3 cup water, 3 1/4 cups bread flour, 3/4 cup cider, along with cranberries and salt (pictured, second from left). Stir until dough forms (pictured, second from right); let dough sit to let flour hydrate, about 20 minutes. Transfer dough to a floured surface, and knead, using a bench scraper to help

remove dough from surface, until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a greased bowl; cover with plastic wrap, and place in a cold oven. Let rest until slightly inflated, about 1 hour. Transfer dough to a floured surface and flatten slightly. Fold top and bottom edges toward middle. Return dough, seam side down, to bowl (pictured, far right); cover. Let sit until doubled in size, about 3 hours.

4 Repeat folding procedure, and place dough, seam side down, into a greased 8" x 5" x 2 1/2" loaf pan, cover with plastic again, and return to oven. Let sit until dough reaches top of the loaf pan, about 3 hours. One hour before baking, place a cast-iron skillet on bottom rack of oven; position another rack above skillet; place a baking stone on top of it. Heat oven to 475°.

5 Using a razor, slash top of loaf at a 30° angle in four spots. Place loaf on baking stone; place ice in skillet. Bake until brown, about 50 minutes; let cool before serving.





Apple cider levain studded with cranberries (see recipe at left).









# A FEAST FOR ALL

In Senegal, a guest is welcomed with generous helpings of slow-cooked stew and fresh seafood brightly flavored with chiles, citrus, and spice

By John O'Connor  
Photographs by Penny De Los Santos

The remains of a meal at the home of the Gueye family, in Dakar.





Madiakhere Gueye, one of the author's hosts in Dakar. Facing page: *soupoukandia*, an okra and seafood stew (see page 71 for a recipe).









**T**HE HEAT IS GATHERING, driving everyone indoors. It's midafternoon in Dakar, Senegal, and the foot traffic in this narrow, two-story home in the working-class Gibraltar neighborhood is seriously congested. More people arrive every minute—relatives, neighbors, an imam—and collapse in the dark, cool refuge of the living room. In a small kitchen off the courtyard, a handsome, tall woman named Khady Mbow puts the final touches on the *soupoukandia*, a fiery, gumbolike stew of okra, palm oil, Scotch bonnet peppers, and shellfish served over rice. She and her 30-year-old niece, Sini, have spent the morning pounding vegetables in a mortar and pestle, scraping the mash into a steaming pot and stirring relentlessly. The Gueyes own a food processor, but Khady—the family's matriarch and chief culinary architect—believes the mortar and pestle better preserve flavor. Everything is done by hand.

And so I wait, with the other male guests.

In Senegal, the women cook while the men sit in thumb-twirling inertia. Finally, Khady and Sini ladle the *soupoukandia* into a pair of large metal bowls and trundle them inside. Twenty or so people, including four generations of Gueyes, gather around the bowls, spoons hovering. Then Khady gives the order to eat in French, the country's official language: "Mangez!" The spicy *soupoukandia* delivers a swift roundhouse kick, making our noses run and sweat bead up on our foreheads, but our spoons continue to shovel away, clinking off the bottom of the bowls. The dish—sweet and sharp and hot all at once—elicits a chorus of contented grunts and lip-smacking. It's difficult to fathom, here, now, that during my first stay in Senegal, it took me awhile to come around to the cooking.

Ten years ago, when I was in my late-20s, I lived briefly in Dakar, a city of a million people on an arrow-shaped peninsula pointing into the Atlantic. The contrast between

this place of white sand and red-tile roofs and morning air perfumed by baking bread, and my own hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan, couldn't have been starker. After a month of French classes, I moved on to Thiès, a city about 30 miles inland, where my girlfriend at the time worked for an NGO. Things began inauspiciously, as I faced the reality that roughly 50 percent of Senegalese still face: unemployment. This new idleness required a period of acclimatization, as did the food. Half a lifetime of Midwestern meat-and-potato standards had not prepared me for the rich, prodigiously spiced cosmos of Senegalese cooking.

The country's cuisine reflects the influence of its west African neighbors and Morocco, to the north, as well as recent patterns of immigration—particularly, since the 1950s, from Vietnam. There are also the legacies of French and Portuguese colonialism, and a varied topography ranging from a seafood-laden coast to a semi-arid interior awash in millet and peanuts. (See "Senegal's Regional Cuisines," page 65.) Despite its recent elec-

**Half a lifetime of Midwestern meat and potatoes had not prepared me for Senegal's rich, prodigiously spiced cooking**

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tion turmoil, Senegal has been an oasis of stability and democratic rule in west Africa since winning independence from the French in 1960. Still, hunger is endemic in rural areas, and the country continues to suffer from periodic food shortages. All these factors converge in the capital, Dakar. Here and throughout the country, meals tend to be single-dish affairs, with everyone grazing from one bowl or platter, using spoons or bare hands to scoop up meat and vegetables—always supplemented with rice or couscous. *Sosa kaani*, an incendiary sauce made from Scotch bonnet peppers, is on every table at every meal.

Although it's borderline sacrilegious to say so in Senegal, I never took to the national dish of *thieboudienne*: rice, fish, and vegetables stewed in a chile-hot tomato base that gets its signature saline funk from two essential Senegalese flavorings, *gejj* (dried fermented fish) and *yéet* (dried fermented snails). The clamor of intense flavors and sensations—the concentrated sweetness of tomato paste, the searing heat of Scotch bonnet peppers, and that profoundly fishy bass note—was just too loud for me. I'll confess it wasn't the only one of Senegal's boldly

flavored foods that my palate didn't prove equal to at the time. I did, however, come to love *mâfe*, a delicious peanut stew made with chicken, fish, or lamb. And I developed what my girlfriend considered a troubling obsession with a tangy sauce of cooked-down onions and peppers called *yassa*, served with



grilled chicken or fish. My favorite meals were eaten at friends' houses, prepared in sparse courtyards by women and girls using little by way of equipment besides a mortar and pestle, some dull knives, a propane tank, and a small charcoal grill. As I quickly learned, a guest in Senegal is treated like a king, given the best seat, the biggest cut of meat, and encouraged to eat until he or she

From left: peppers, scallions, tomatoes, and herbs for sale at Marché Kermel, in Dakar; a coffee vendor at Marché Sandaga, in Dakar.

is bursting.

For my girlfriend and me, Senegal was an exercise in blind optimism that didn't pan out. After 11 months, I went home. She stayed. Back in the States, living in New York City, I occasionally felt pangs of regret. I wondered if I'd stayed long enough, made the most of my time there, seen enough, done enough. *Thieboudienne* became for me a symbol of all that I'd failed to embrace in Senegal. As luck would have it, a Senegalese restaurant opened around the corner from my Brooklyn apartment, and the chef, Pierre Thiam, became a friend. When I confided in Pierre my sense of longing for a Senegal I never fully knew, he pointed out the obvious: What was keeping me from going back?

As my plane lands in Senegal this time, I'm determined to hit the ground running. Pierre's advice: Get myself invited into homes, because that's where the best Senegalese cooking happens. Landing at the Gueyes' turns out to be a terrific stroke





of luck. To counterbalance my deplorable French, worse Wolof (the main indigenous language), and appalling sense of direction, I've hired as my translator and guide Medoune Gueye, Khady's 33-year-old son, whose first act of business is to steer me into his mother's kitchen. I eat a lot of Khady's cooking during my week in Dakar, including her *yassa jën*, the piquant onion-and-pepper sauce, served with grilled grouper. I've had several variations across Senegal; Khady's irresistibly tart, sticky *yassa* makes liberal use of cayenne, lime, garlic, and mustard. Eating it after so much time away breeds a curious dissonance. Still, it's good to be back.

AFTER A FEW DAYS in Dakar, I decide to return to my old town, Thiès, and Medoune accompanies me. I'm curious to see how it has changed. After Dakar, the place feels provincial, quaint. But there's another side to Thiès: an exuberant, frantically emergent

city. Half a million people now live here, in tracts of beige cinderblock homes. Freshly minted buildings stand where I remember there being only sandy lots. My friend Samuel's grocery store has vanished, absorbed by a massive new house.

As we make our way around the city, the heat index spikes, and Medoune suggests we pause for tea. Dethie Mbow, Medoune's garrulous cousin, shepherds us into the courtyard of his breezy, low-slung house and promptly dispatches a neighbor boy to fetch some snacks from a vendor around the corner. The boy returns with two classic Senegalese street foods: *pastels*, tiny empanadas stuffed with fish and onions; and *accara*, black-eyed-pea fritters. We plunge the *pastels* and the *accara* into *kaani* sauce, and pop them into our mouths.

While we eat, Medoune commences the *ataya*, an elaborate, three-cup tea ritual that is ubiquitous in west Africa. Chinese gunpowder tea is brewed with sugar and mint

Clockwise from top left: *thiéboudienne*; Corniche Ouest, a beach in Dakar; a fishing boat comes ashore at Soumbédioune; *accara*, black-eyed pea fritters, served with spicy *kaani* sauce; Marie Jeanette Diop (left) and a household employee at Diop's home in Dakar. (See page 70 for recipes.)

and served in a tiny glass called a *kas*. The first serving is strong and bitter; the second a tad sweeter, with a little mint added; the third is a mint-infused sugar-bomb. Each serving has a heady top layer of foam, achieved by pouring the tea from one *kas* to another from a great height. Boys apprentice at the *ataya* for years before they master the proper foam-to-tea ratio. Medoune, who considers himself something of an *ataya* savant, clearly relishes the opportunity to showcase his talents. In the midst of a busy day, the *ataya* functions as a social and gustatory salve—an excuse merely to sit and chat and enjoy a mellow, if highly caffeinated, moment of quiet.

Caffeine notwithstanding, the tea has a narcotic effect on me. By round three, I'm laid out on a futon in a back bedroom, drifting off to sleep, the flavors of the *pastels* and *accara* lingering on my tongue.

**In the midst of a busy day, the ritual of drinking tea is an excuse merely to sit and chat and enjoy a mellow moment of quiet**





AFTER A WEEK OF OUTRIGHT gluttony, I've taken all the culinary spoils Senegal has to offer, with one exception: my old nemesis, *thieboudienne*. It's time for a reckoning, and also—despite the tacit ban on men in the kitchen—time to do some cooking myself.

My last meal in Dakar takes place at the home of Didier and Marie Jeannette (nicknamed Jeanine) Diop. Didier is a childhood friend of my pal Pierre back in Brooklyn. Pierre has assured me that Jeanine's *thieboudienne* will change my mind about the dish.

The day before the meal, Jeanine and I go grocery shopping at a large covered market downtown called Marché Kermel. Its symmetry and order are impressive. The building is vaguely octagonal, with concentric rows of produce, meat, and fish stalls spiraling neatly inward from exterior archways. Still, navigating any Dakar market requires great tactical sense, and it's all I can do to keep up with Jeanine as she swoops from vendor to vendor, picking through vegetables and haggling over prices. Normally a sweet, soft-spoken woman, she transforms into a cold and ruthless negotiator.

"I love to bargain," (continued on page 68)

## SENEGAL'S REGIONAL CUISINES

When I was living in Senegal, hitting the highway and getting out into the countryside as often as I could, I was always struck by how radically the landscape changed from point A to point B. In Thiès, where I lived, on the edge of the semi-arid Sahel plain, sandstorms sometimes swept into town; we'd suddenly find ourselves half-blind and bumping into lampposts. Yet due south, in the Casamance region, I encountered tropical forests, mangroves, and a lush river delta full of dolphins and white pelicans, and then outside Touba, in east-central Senegal, red lowland savannas and peanut plantations stretched to the horizon. Although there's great consistency across the national palate, this varied topography divides the country into three principal regions, each with its own distinct cuisine. —J.O.

**The South:** Before France consolidated its colonial rule in the second half of the 19th century, Portugal made inroads in tropical Casamance and helped shape dishes like *caldou*, a fish soup similar to Portuguese *caldeirada de peixe*, made with lime, tomatoes, and grilled carp or tilapia. The Diola people have cultivated rice in the river flood plains of this region for centuries, while *fonio*, an ancient species of millet that was a staple before the French arrived, is now making a comeback thanks to its reputation as a super-grain rich in amino acids. The rainforest, dense with game, supplies *dibiteries*—roadside butcher shops—which offer delicious grilled game meat like antelope, as well as beef and lamb.

**The North:** Seafood is abundant in this part of Senegal—from both the Atlantic and the Senegal River—and many of the country's most beloved dishes, including the fish-and-rice specialty *thieboudienne*, originated in the former French colonial capital of Saint-Louis. Given its proximity to the Sahara, the north of Senegal shares many features with North African cuisine. Couscous has been produced here from pearl millet by the nomadic Fula group for centuries; in fact, Moroccans may have learned to process and steam couscous from the Fula. From the east, along the border with Mali, where peanut plantations stretch for miles, comes *mâfe*, a thick peanut stew made with chicken or lamb.

**Dakar:** In Senegal's cosmopolitan capital, Dakar, the Wolof are the largest ethnic group. As of 1902, this was the capital of all of French West Africa, which accounts for the ubiquity of fresh bread; every neighborhood has its boulangeries. Vietnamese immigrants began arriving in the 1950s, as French colonial Indochina plunged into war, hence the high concentration of Vietnamese restaurants in Dakar. Today, in fact, Senegalese of various ethnicities use Southeast Asian fish sauce as a substitute for traditional umami-boosters like *gejj* (dried fermented fish), even in the revered national dish *thieboudienne*.





Khady Mbow (left) and her niece Sini prepare a meal at their home in Dakar.









(continued from page 65) she says. After hearing a vendor's price for a bushel of okra, Jeanine bursts out laughing, waves him away, and descends on the next stall, where the vendor quickly bends to her will. "You can't let them hustle you," Jeanine tells me. By the time we drive back to the Diops', the trunk of their blue Chevrolet Optra is sagging with produce—onions, turnips, eggplants, Scotch bonnet peppers, squash, manioc, carrots, cabbage, tamarind, cauliflower, and I forget what else, but so much that we had to hire a porter to lug it to the car for us—plus a grouper the size of a small submarine, purchased at another market, on the beach.

Preparing the *thiéboudienne* takes all day. We start at 8 A.M. in the Diops' rear courtyard, with sunlight slashing through the palm trees and a pair of disheveled chickens scraping around. My first job is to make the *rof*, or stuffing, for the grouper. It requires mashing vegetables into a thick paste. This I can do. An onion, a head of garlic, a bunch

of parsley, and a handful of dried chiles gradually yield to the pestle. I turn to the grouper, which has been cut into eight or nine steaks. I poke two holes in each, stuff them with the *rof*, and then coat them thoroughly with the vegetable paste.

Under Jeanine's supervision, I sauté onions and green peppers in a large pot heated by a propane tank, then stir in some tomato paste. Once the sauce starts to come together, we add a few cups of water to thin it and let it simmer a while. I carefully arrange the grouper steaks in the pot, followed by some cabbage; dried *bisaap* (hibiscus) leaves and tamarind paste, both of which impart a wonderful tartness; and four or five Scotch bonnet peppers. As the pot continues to simmer, we add other ingredients: hunks of salted, fermented cod (*gejj*) and some dried snails (*yéet*), turnips, eggplants, squash, manioc, carrots, cauliflower, and okra.

Once the vegetables have cooked through,

From left: a bowl of *saladu ñebbe*, a salad of black-eyed peas, tomatoes, chiles, scallions, and herbs (see page 71 for a recipe); a tea break on the beach at Corniche Ouest, in Dakar; Marché Kermel, in Dakar.

I pluck them out and place them in a large bowl, followed by the fish. Rice is added to the pot, where the remaining sauce quickly stains it a deep red. Finally, the cooked rice is scraped into a waiting bowl and the blackened crust at the bottom of the pan—a much-loved delicacy called *xóoñ*—is plated to be served on the side.

It's nearly 3 P.M. by the time we finish. Didier returns from work just as Jeanine's parents, Joseph and Marie Thérèse Nesseim, arrive, and the five of us arrange ourselves on a mat in the basement next to an open window. A heaping platter of *thiéboudienne* appears, with the grouper sitting atop the rice, and the eggplant and manioc and cauliflower on the sides. With a breeze buffeting us, we dig in.

Pierre is right. Jeanine's is the Cadillac Fleetwood of *thiéboudiennes*. The tamarind cuts through the pungency of the *gejj*, and the dried snails, used to enrich the base, lend

**Preparing the *thiéboudienne* takes all day. We start at 8 A.M. in the courtyard, with sunlight slashing through the palm trees**





a hint of umami flavor. It's a more nuanced version of the pungent *thieboudienne* I had recalled. But it's also familiar, with a distinctive peppery finish. Didier reminds me that *thieboudienne* originated in Saint-Louis, the former colonial capital in the country's north, near the border with Mauritania. Over time it became the national dish, so rabidly and universally was it loved by all Senegalese—and now, at long last, by me.

Jeanine's mother reveals that the recipe has been passed down in her family for generations, that her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother all made *thieboudienne* like this. She taught Jeanine how to prepare it, and she believes her daughter has done well today. "I'm proud of you," she says, and Jeanine beams.

Dusk is approaching. After a long, hot day, I'm stumbling with fatigue. But I linger for a while, chatting with the Diops on their patio. This is the kind of occasion that I remember best from my time in Senegal: unwinding with friends after a meal in a cool, shady place, the early-evening sky turning a livid orange as the muezzins sing out the call to prayer. I'd like it to last a little longer. 🐦

## The Guide Dakar

### WHERE TO STAY

**Hôtel Al Afifa** 46 rue Jules Ferry (221/33/889-9090) Rates: \$90–\$220 Double With its lush garden patio, this hotel feels like a colonial throwback. Its location—on a quiet side street within easy walking distance of several of Dakar's best outdoor markets—is tough to beat.

**Radisson Blu** Route de la Corniche Ouest (221/33/869-3310; [radissonblu.com/hotel-dakar](http://radissonblu.com/hotel-dakar)) Rates: \$250–\$280 Double Set right in Dakar's Fann Corniche neighborhood on a lively oceanfront esplanade, this sparkling new high-rise boasts a huge outdoor swimming pool and beautiful ocean views.

### WHERE TO EAT

**Keur N'Deye** 68 rue Vincens (221/33/821-4973) This simple, cozy oasis in the heart of downtown Dakar is widely known for serving some of the best Senegalese cuisine available outside of home kitchens. The *yassa poulet*—grilled chicken with a tangy onion-and-pepper sauce—is excellent.

**Le Djembé** 56 rue St. Michel (221/33/821-0666) A very pleasant hole-in-the-wall located right behind the Place de l'Indépendance—Dakar's central square—this place is famous for its *thieboudienne*, the rice-and-tomato-based fish dish that is the Senegalese national dish.

**Chez Loutcha** 101 rue Moussé Diop (221/33/821-0302) This rollicking eatery, popular with the downtown lunchtime crowd, specializes in both Senegalese and Cape Verdian dishes, served in gargantuan portions. Try the *mâfe ginaar*, rice and chicken in a thick peanut sauce.

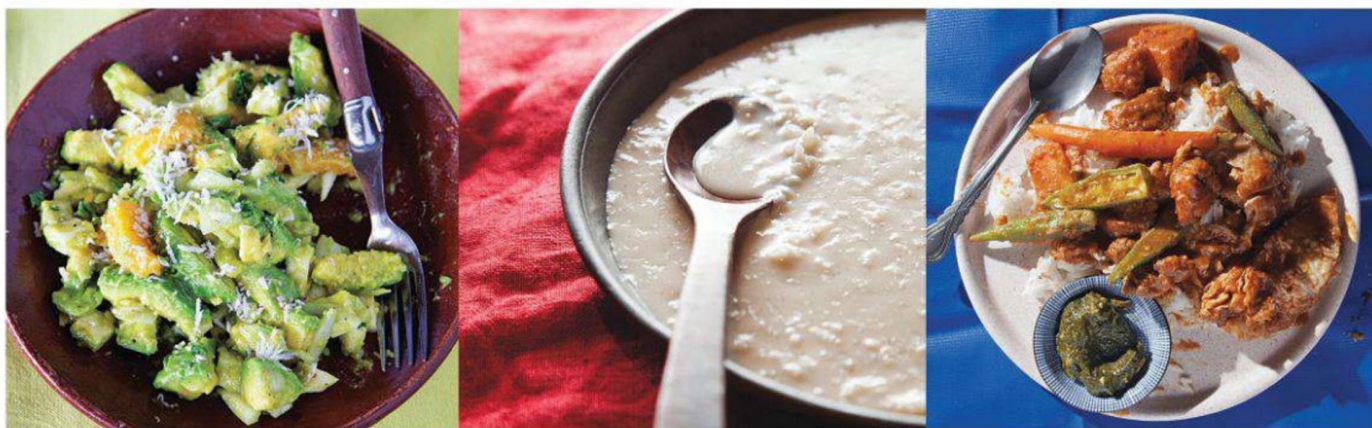
**Pâtisserie Les Ambassades**, 4 boulevard de l'Est, Point E (221/33/825-5587) Dakar is teeming with Parisian-style cafés, and Les Ambassades, filled at all hours with employees of nearby embassies, is arguably the best. It would be hard to find a better *pain au chocolat* in all of west Africa.

### WHAT TO DO

**Marché Sandaga** Avenue Pompidou Dakar's largest outdoor market is chock-full of classic Senegalese street foods, including fluffy beignets; *pastels*, tiny empanada-like parcels filled with fish; and *accara*, black-eyed-pea fritters, served with *kaani*, a fiery chile-and-tomato sauce.

**Soumbédioune** Route de la Corniche Ouest At this evening fish market right on the beach, you can buy fresh grouper, swordfish, barracuda, prawns, and sea urchins fresh off the boats. Several makeshift food stalls called *tanganas* sell grilled fish, omelets, and pasta. Wash everything down with a *café touba*, a heavily sugared, thick, bracing coffee.





From left: *saladu awooka àk mango* (avocado-mango salad); *sombi* (coconut rice pudding); and *màfe ginaar* (peanut and chicken stew) with *khouthisa* sauce.

### Accara

(Black-Eyed-Pea Fritters)

MAKES 30 FRITTERS

Crisp, light-as-air fritters like these (pictured on page 64) are a popular street snack throughout Senegal and the rest of west Africa. They're usually accompanied by chile-hot, tomato-based *kaani* sauce (see recipe, right).

- 1 cup dried black-eyed peas
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ small onion, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Canola oil, for frying

**1** Place the black-eyed peas in a large container, and cover with cold water by 2". Cover, place in the refrigerator, and let the peas soak for at least 8 hours or overnight.

**2** Drain peas, and transfer to a food processor; pulse until slightly broken and skins break away from peas, about 8 pulses. Transfer peas to a medium bowl, and cover with water; rub peas in water between the palms of your hands to loosen the skins. Let peas sit until skins float to top of water. Slowly drain water from peas, allowing skins to drain with water; add more water if necessary, and repeat rubbing and draining process until all skins are removed from peas.

**3** Place peas in a blender along with baking soda, onion, salt and pepper, and 3 tbsp. water; purée, scraping down sides of blender if necessary, until smooth.

**4** Pour oil to a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. Dutch oven, and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 365°. Working in batches, use two small spoons to

drop tablespoon-sized balls of batter in oil, and cook until golden brown, about 3 minutes.

**5** Transfer fritters to paper towels to drain, and sprinkle with salt. Serve with *kaani* sauce (see below).

### Sosu Kaani

(Habanero Chile Sauce)

MAKES 2 CUPS

This spicy, cooked chile-and-tomato sauce (pictured on page 64) is used to add a kick to virtually every dish in Senegal, especially *accara* and other fried street snacks. To make it spicier, simply add more habanero chiles or a pinch of cayenne.

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 3 medium tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 habanero or Scotch bonnet chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**1** Heat oil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium heat; add onion and garlic, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 6 minutes. Add tomato paste, and cook, stirring, until lightly caramelized, about 2 minutes. Add tomatoes, chile, and bay leaf, and cook, stirring often, until sauce is reduced and thickened, about 5 minutes.

**2** Remove and discard bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper. Purée sauce in a food processor or blender, and let cool to room tem-

perature. Store in a container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

### Màfe Ginaar

(Peanut and Chicken Stew)

SERVES 6-8

For this delicious, sumptuous stew (pictured above, right), you can make your own peanut butter or use a natural version, minus the stabilizers and sugar found in many commercial brands, to get the right silky texture and pure peanut flavor.

For the peanut butter and chicken:

- 2 cups shelled, skinned peanuts
- ¼ cup peanut oil
- 2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1½" pieces
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the sauce:

- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 habanero or Scotch bonnet chile, finely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 8 oz. small carrots, halved lengthwise
- 10 okra pods, halved lengthwise
- 2 medium sweet potatoes or 1 small butternut squash, peeled, halved, seeded, and cut into 1" pieces
- 1 small head green cabbage, cut into 8 wedges, core left intact
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- Cooked white rice or fonio, for serving (see page 77)
- Khouthisa (hibiscus leaf conserve), for serving (see page 77)

**1** Make the peanut butter: Heat oven to 350°. Spread the peanuts on a rimmed baking sheet, and bake, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Let cool, and transfer peanuts to a food processor or mortar and pestle and process until they form a smooth paste. Transfer peanut butter to a sealed plastic container, and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

**2** Brown the chicken: Heat oil in a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season chicken with salt and pepper, and add to pot; cook, turning once, until browned all over, about 12 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate, and set aside.

**3** Make the sauce: Add garlic and onion to the pot, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 6 minutes. Add tomato paste, and cook, stirring often, until lightly caramelized, about 2 minutes. Add ¼ cup of the peanut butter, habanero chile, and bay leaf, and cook, stirring, until lightly toasted, about 4 minutes. Add stock, and stir until smooth; add reserved chicken, carrots, okra, sweet potatoes, and cabbage, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, covered partially and stirring occasionally, until chicken and vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes.

**4** Using a slotted spoon, transfer chicken and vegetables to a serving bowl or platter. Continue cooking sauce, stirring often, until reduced by half and thickened, about 12 minutes.

**5** To serve, season the sauce with salt and pepper, and pour over chicken and vegetables. Serve over rice or fonio and khouthisa on the side.

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; TODD COLEMAN (2)



## Saladu Awooka àk Mango

(Avocado-Mango Salad)

SERVES 4-6

The creamy avocado, sweet mango, and bright citrus in this salad (pictured on page 70) make a refreshing counterpoint to Senegal's rich and savory stews.

- ½ cup finely chopped parsley
- ¼ cup peanut or canola oil
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp. fresh orange juice
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and cut into ¼" cubes
- 2 ripe avocados, pitted, peeled, and cut into 1" chunks
- 1 small navel orange, peeled and cut into segments
- 2 tsp. unsweetened shredded coconut (optional)

**1** Whisk together 6 tbsp. parsley, oil, both citrus juices, jalapeño, and salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add mangoes and avocados, and toss gently to combine; cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate to meld flavors, about 1 hour.

**2** To serve, transfer avocado salad to a serving bowl; halve orange segments crosswise, and lay over salad. Sprinkle with remaining parsley, and coconut if using. Serve chilled.

## Saladu Ñebbe

(Black-Eyed-Pea Salad)

SERVES 8

Simple and satisfying, this chile-spiked black-eyed-pea salad dressed with fresh lime juice (pictured on page 68) is a great side dish for grilled fish. The longer it sits, the better it tastes, so let it marinate for an hour or more before serving.

- ¾ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 cup roughly chopped parsley
- 1 cup canola oil
- 5 cups cooked black-eyed peas
- 10 scallions, roughly chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 medium tomato, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 medium cucumber, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 habanero or Scotch bonnet chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- Kosher salt and freshly

ground black pepper, to taste

**1** In a large bowl, whisk together the lime juice and parsley. While whisking, drizzle in the canola oil to make a smooth dressing.

**2** Add the black-eyed peas, scallions, bell pepper, tomato, cucumber, and chile to the dressing. Season the mixture with salt and pepper. Set aside at room temperature for at least 1 hour, or refrigerate up to overnight to marinate and meld the flavors. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

## Sombi

(Coconut Rice Pudding)

SERVES 4-6

More like a creamy porridge than a pudding in consistency, this sweet dish (pictured on page 70) is commonly eaten for breakfast or as an afternoon snack in Senegal.

- 4 cups coconut milk
- 1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut, fresh or dried
- ½ cup packed light or dark brown sugar
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped and reserved
- 2 cups cooked white rice
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice

**1** Bring coconut milk, coconut, sugar, salt, and vanilla bean with seeds to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat and cook, stirring often, until reduced slightly, about 5 minutes.

**2** Add rice, and cook, stirring, until rice breaks down and thickens soup slightly, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in juice; serve hot.

## Soupoukandia

(Okra and Seafood Stew)

SERVES 6-8

Fish sauce and nutty palm oil flavor this luscious stew (pictured on page 61), undoubtedly a predecessor of Louisiana-style gumbo.

For the vegetable broth:

- 12 cups fish or vegetable stock
- 4 cups thick-sliced okra
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped

For the seafood soup:

- 6 tbsp. palm oil (see page 77)
- 4 tbsp. fish sauce (see page 77)
- 1 large eggplant, cut into

large chunks, or 4 small Thai eggplants

- 2 habanero or Scotch bonnet chiles, slit in half lengthwise
- 24 mussels, cleaned and de-bearded
- 16 medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Cooked white rice or fonio, for serving (see page 77)

**1** Make the vegetable broth: Bring the stock to a boil in a 6-qt. saucepan over high heat, then add okra, bay leaves, and onions. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until okra is very tender and stock has reduced by one-quarter, about 1½ hours.

**2** Make the seafood soup: Add the palm oil, 3 tbsp. fish sauce, eggplant, and chiles to the vegetable broth, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soup has thickened and okra falls apart, about 30 minutes.

**3** Add mussels and shrimp; cover pan, and cook until mussels open and shrimp are cooked through, about 4 minutes.

**4** To serve, remove from heat and stir in remaining fish sauce and pepper. Ladle soup into bowls, and serve with rice or fonio.

## Thiéboudienne

(Senegalese Fish and Rice)

SERVES 6-8

The national dish of Senegal, this boldly flavored combination of fish, rice, and vegetables simmered in tomato sauce (pictured on page 64) is a hearty one-pot meal. You can make it with any fish or vegetables you have on hand, including potatoes, cassava, squash or pumpkin, and plantains. See page 74 for more information on the Senegalese ingredients traditionally used in this dish.

For the fish and stuffing:

- ¾ cup finely chopped parsley
- 2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 scallions, minced
- ¾ small yellow onion, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 4-oz. filets grouper or red snapper

For the thiéboudienne:

- ½ cup canola or palm oil
- 2 medium yellow onions, roughly chopped

- 1 medium green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped
- 1 12-oz. can tomato paste
- 6 cups fish or vegetable stock
- 6 small carrots, halved crosswise
- 1 large eggplant, cut into large chunks, or 4 small Thai eggplants
- 1 medium turnip, peeled and cut into 12 wedges
- ½ cassava root, peeled and cut into 1½" chunks
- ½ cup dried white hibiscus flowers (optional; see page 77)
- 2 tbsp. tamarind paste (see page 77)
- 2 tbsp. fish sauce (see page 77)
- 4 cups basmati rice
- Lime wedges, to serve

**1** Make the fish and stuffing: Mix together parsley, chile flakes, garlic, scallion, onion, and salt and pepper in a bowl. Using a paring knife, cut a 2" slit lengthwise in each fish filet; stuff filets with the herb mixture, and set aside.

**2** Make the thiéboudienne: Heat oil in an 8-qt. Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onions and green pepper, and cook, stirring, until softened, about 10 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very soft and paste is lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Add stock, and bring to a boil.

**3** Reduce heat to medium-low, and add filets; cook until fish is just cooked through, about 18 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove filets and transfer to a plate, then cover to keep warm.

**4** Add carrots, eggplants, turnips, and cassava, and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 40 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer vegetables to a bowl; keep warm. Add hibiscus flowers (if using), tamarind paste, and fish sauce, and cook, stirring occasionally, until hibiscus flowers soften, about 5 minutes.

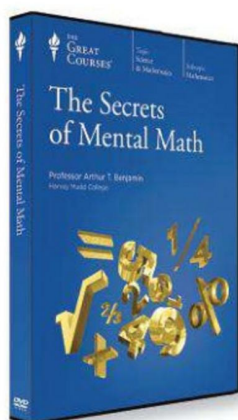
**5** Add rice, and stir to combine; reduce heat to low, and cook, covered, until rice is tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from heat, and fluff rice with a fork.

**6** To serve, divide fish, vegetables, and rice among serving plates; serve with lime wedges (for squeezing over fish).



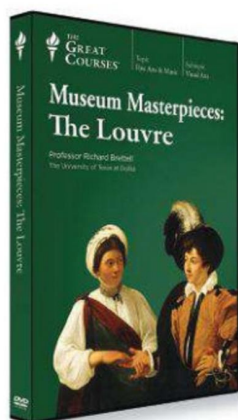


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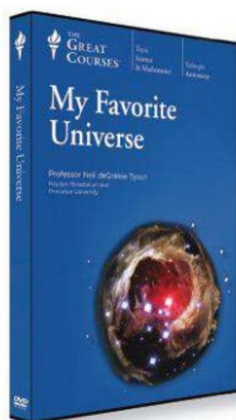
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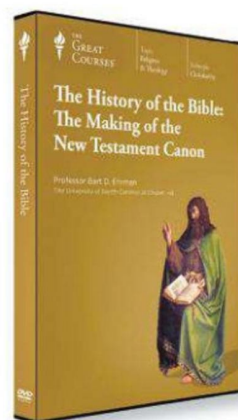
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IN THE SAVEUR

# KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques From Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

## The Flavors of Senegal

**E**VERYONE LEARNING TO cook Senegalese food should be so lucky as to have a friend like Pierre Thiam. We first got to know the chef, a native of Dakar, Senegal, through his restaurants Yolele and Le Grand Dakar, which he ran in Brooklyn, New York, until recently; his cookbook *Yolele! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal* (Lake Isle Press, 2008) is our go-to Senegalese reference. As we tested recipes for this issue's feature on Senegalese cuisine (see "A Feast for All," page 58), he generously agreed to spend some time in the SAVEUR kitchen. Before we started cooking, though, Thiam took us to a couple of West African markets in New York City, where we picked up some staples of the Senegalese pantry. In Harlem, we ducked into Nawel Keur Mame Asta Walo, a tiny grocery store lined with sacks of rice and plastic jugs of bright-red palm oil. »

TODD COLEMAN



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» I hail from Mississippi, so as we strolled the aisles, Thiam related some of the ingredients we found to ones used in the American South; Senegalese, he explained, were among the first enslaved Africans brought to the South, and they left a lasting mark on the cooking. "This is *fonio*," he said, indicating a type of millet with the consistency of couscous. "It's a bit like grits when it's cooked." Tossing a bag of dried black-eyed peas into our basket, he said, "These we purée and fry to make fritters called *accara*—the Senegalese answer to hush

puppies." At Gold Coast Trading Company, in the Bronx, Thiam pointed out smoked, dried, and fermented ingredients that are added to stews and sauces in the same way that smoked ham hocks are added to Southern greens and soups. "This is how we build flavor," he told me, "layer upon layer."

Below, a guide to some of the essential ingredients we purchased—the building blocks of Senegal's bright and bold tasting cuisine. (See The Pantry, page 77, for sources.) —Ben Mims



**SENEGALESE SHOPPING LIST** Thick chunks of salty, pungent ❶ *gejj*, made by fermenting and drying various kinds of white-fleshed fish, are added whole or crumbled into sauces and stews. ❷ *Netetou*, which also goes by the names *dawadawa* and *sumbala*, is made from African locust beans, which are pulverized, fermented, and dried to make a funky seasoning similar to the fermented black beans used in Chinese cooking. The flesh of sea snails fermented and dried makes an ingredient called ❸ *yéet*, which imparts a musky flavor to soups and stews, including Senegal's national dish, *thieboudienne* (see page 71 for a recipe). All of the above are available at African markets in the U.S., but even in Senegal, cooks often substitute Southeast Asian-style fish sauce, which imparts a similar brininess. Vividly red ❹ *palm oil*, obtained by crushing the fruit of the oil palm, is lower in saturated fat than the palm kernel oil obtained from the seed of the same fruit. Semi-solid at room temperature, palm oil has a pleasant, mild, nutty taste. It's used as a frying medium and also to bring flavor, color, and richness to stews and other dishes. Tiny seeds of ❺ *fonio*, a species of millet considered a "super-grain" thanks to its high concentration of nutritious amino acids, are steamed and served in many parts of West Africa as a staple side dish, similar to rice or couscous. ❻ *Natural peanut butter* is what gives the luscious stew *mâfe* (see page 70 for a recipe) its rich flavor and silky texture; you can also make your own by grinding roasted peanuts. Just be sure to steer clear of commercial peanut butters containing sugar and stabilizers that will alter the flavor of the dish. The dried petals of red and white hibiscus, called *bisaap* in Senegal, bring a tart flavor to many dishes and drinks. The white flowers, known as ❼ *bisaap blanc*, have a milder tartness than the red ones do. The leaves of hibiscus are also used in cooking. They are simmered with chiles, salt, and okra until they break down into a thick paste called ❽ *khouthia*, a piquant condiment that's served alongside grilled chicken and fish, and cuts the richness of *mâfe* and other unctuous dishes.

TODD COLEMAN (6)



# Tipping the Scales

**Y**OU MIGHT HAVE noticed that the bread recipes in this issue (see “American Bread,” page 42) measure ingredients by weight, a change from the typical recipe style of portioning out only in tablespoons, cups, and other volume measures. As we developed these recipes, we relied heavily on our kitchen scales—digital models that toggle easily between ounces and grams—because accuracy in measuring is never more important than it is when making bread. The only way to be sure you’re getting the same measure every time is by using a scale. I know, because I conducted a little experiment: First, I scooped flour straight from the bag using a cup measure and then weighed the flour; the scale read 5½ ounces. When I scooped a cup’s worth from the flour jar we keep on the counter, the scale read 5 ounces. Why the difference? Flour in a bag has been compacted for shipping, and when you pour flour into a storage container, you aerate it slightly. Fact is, neither of those cups I scooped weighed in at what most recipes presume a cup of flour equals: 4½ ounces. If you don’t have a scale, here’s how to ensure that your cup con-

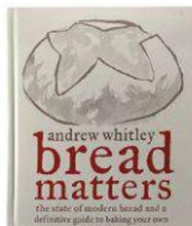
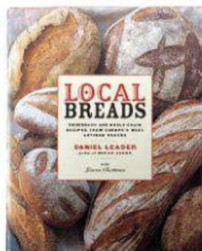
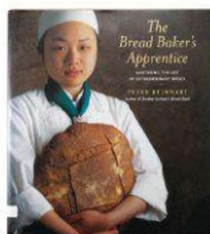
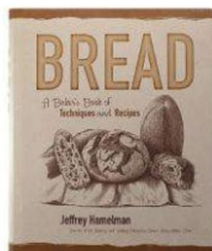


tains the right amount of flour: Use a spoon to stir the flour in the container. Drop spoonfuls of flour into a measuring cup until it’s overflowing, then sweep a knife across the rim to make an even surface. This is the way we do it whenever we measure out flour in the *SAVEUR* kitchen. When I weighed the flour I’d measured in this way, it was 4½ ounces on the nose. —Kellie Evans

## In the Saveur Library: Bread Books

Of the dozens of books devoted to bread on our shelves, a few proved indispensable as we developed the recipes in “American Bread,” on page 42. Any baker would do well to keep the über-comprehensive *Bread: A Baker’s Book of Techniques and Recipes* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004) at hand. The instructions from author Jeffrey Hamelman, a certified master bread maker, are blessedly detailed, with illustrations demonstrating the proper way to knead, braid (30 pages on this alone), and do most anything else required to transform a mass of dough into a beautiful loaf. For the beginner, *The Bread Baker’s Apprentice* (Ten Speed Press, 2001), by baking expert Peter Reinhart, provides an accessible way in, first laying out the basic principles behind baking any bread. Then it provides more than 50 formulas for specific breads, including brioche, bagels, and the perfect Tuscan loaf. Good bread always tells a story about where it comes from, and in *Local Breads* (W.W. Nor-

ton & Co., 2007), Daniel Leader, founder of Bread Alone Bakeries in upstate New York, travels across Europe to investigate the regional traditions that were the inspiration for him and his fellow pioneers in the American artisan bread movement. One chapter finds him in the wheat fields of Italy’s Murgia plain; another, in Grimminger pretzel bakery in Munich. Along the way, he lays out the recipes collected in his travels with utter clarity. If it’s possible, after reading these paeans to the power of bread made by hand, to wonder why all of this is important, look no further than *Bread Matters* (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2009). British baker Andrew Whitley gets down to brass tacks about what exactly makes artisan bread healthier and tastier, then offers such alluring cases in point as *arkatena* from Cyprus made with chickpea flour and fennel seeds, a coriander-laced Russian rye called *Borodinsky*, and dozens of others, both savory and sweet. —Marne Setton



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# THE PANTRY

## A Guide to Resources

*In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!*

BY BEN MIMS

### Fare

Sample the smoked cheesecake and other Asian-inspired desserts at **Spot Dessert Bar** (13 Saint Marks Place, New York City; 212/677-5670). To make the Thai smoked cheesecake recipe (see page 12), purchase a **Thai incense candle**, available from Temple of Thai (\$5.79; 877/811-8773; templeofthai.com). To purchase **wild edible flowers**, contact The Chef's Garden (800/289-4644; chefs-garden.com/edible-flowers) and Paradise Farms (305/248-4181; paradisefarms.net). When in Iceland, dine on Magnús Hauksson's fresh, local seafood at **Tjörúhúsið** (Suðurgata; 456-4419, 897-6733). To plan a trip to Costa Rica to visit the vibrant **Mercado Central**, go to visitcostarica.com.

### Cellar

For information on where to buy the **Campolargo Branco Arinto 2009** (\$18), the **Quinta de La Rosa Reserve 2007** (\$48), the **Quinta da Terrugem Alicantina Alentejo Single Estate 2007** (\$23), and the **Quinta do Vale Meão Douro 2008** (\$87), contact Tri-Vin Imports (800/551-8466; tri-vin.com); the **Esporão Reserva 2008**, contact Aidil Wines (\$25 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 973/344-6820; www.aidilwines.com); the **JM Fonseca Twin Vines Vinho Verde 2011**, contact Palm Bay International (\$8

for a 750-milliliter bottle; 516/802-4700; palmbay.com); the **Quinta do Louridal Poema Alvarinho 2009**, contact T. Edward Wines (\$32 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 212/233-1504; www.tedwardwines.com); and the **Quinta do Monte d'Oiro Reserva 2003** (\$45) and the **Wine & Soul Guru 2010** (\$45), contact Winebow (201/445-0620; winebow.com).

### Corsica

To make the Corsican-style cheesecake and the fresh cheese-and-mint omelet (see page 40), buy **brocciu cheese**, available from Corsican Products (8 euros for 500 grams; 33/979/530-101; corsican-products.com). To make the chestnut flour tart recipe (see page 40), use **chestnut flour**, available from Amazon.com (\$20.60 for a 1-pound bag; amazon.com). To find out where to buy **wines from Corsica** (see page 34), contact Kermit Lynch (510/524-1524; kermitylynch.com).

### American Bread

Visit our favorite bakeries to try their artisan loaves: **Acme Bread Company** (1601 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, California; 510/524-1327; acmebread.com); **Balthazar Bakery** (80 Spring Street, New York City; 212/965-1785; balthazarbakery.com); **Berkshire Mountain Bakery** (367 Park Street, Housatonic, Massachusetts; 413/274-3412; berkshiremountainbakery.com); **Bien Cuit** (120 Smith Street, Brooklyn, New York; 718/852-0200; biencuit.com); **Blue Duck Bakery Café** (56275 Main Road, Southold, New York; 631/629-4123; blueduckbakerycafe.com); **Bread Alone** (3962 Route 28, Boiceville, New York; 845/657-3328; breadalone.com); **Columbia City Bakery** (4865 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, Washington; 206/723-6023; columbiacitybakery.com); **Della Fattoria**

(141 Petaluma Boulevard North, Petaluma, California; 707/763-0161; dellafattoria.com); **Gerard's Breads of Traditions**, sold at City Market Onion River Co-op (82 South Winooski Avenue, Burlington, Vermont; 802/861-9700; citymarket.coop); **Grand Central Bakery** (various locations in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington; grandcentralbakery.com); **Hungry Ghost Bread** (62 State Street, Northampton, Massachusetts; 413/582-9009; hungryghostbread.com); **Iggy's Bread of the World** (130 Fawcett Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts; 617/924-0949; iggysbread.com); **Ken's Artisan Bakery** (338 Northwest 21st Avenue, Portland, Oregon; 503/248-2202; kensartisan.com); **La Farm** (4248 Cary Parkway, Cary, North Carolina; 919/657-0657; lafarmbakery.com); **Milo + Olive** (2723 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, California; 310/453-6776; miloandolive.com); **Orwasher's Bakery** (308 East 78th Street, New York, New York; 212/288-6569; orwasherbakery.com); **Pain D'Avignon** at the Essex Street Market (120 Essex Street, New York, New York; 212/673-4950; paindavignon-nyc.com); **Seven Stars Bakery** (various locations in Providence, Rhode Island; 401/521-2200; sevenstarsbakery.com); **Standard Baking Company** (75 Commercial Street, Portland, Maine; 207/773-2112); **Sullivan Street Bakery** (533 West 47th Street, New York, New York; 212/265-5580; sullivanstreetbakery.com); and **Tartine Bakery & Café** (600 Guerrero Street, San Francisco, California; 415/487-2600; tartinebakery.com). To make all our bread recipes (see pages 46–56), use a **baking stone**, available from Amazon.com (\$60.80; amazon.com). To make the four-hour baguette recipe (see page 52), buy a **razor blade**, available from Amazon.com (\$9.99;

look for "baker's blade;" amazon.com). To make the seeded rye loaf recipe (see page 52), purchase **rye flour**, available from King Arthur Flour (\$8.95 for a 3-pound bag; 800/827-6836; kingarthurfLOUR.com), which also carries **whole spelt flour** (\$7.95 for a 16-ounce bag), used to make the spelt levain loaf (see page 56).

### Senegal

To make the okra-and-seafood stew (see page 74), purchase **red palm oil**, available from iHerb.com (\$11.01 for a 14-ounce jar; 951/616-3600; iherb.com) and **fish sauce**, available from Amazon.com (\$16.54 for a 24-ounce bottle; amazon.com). To make the Senegalese fish and rice (see page 41), buy **dried white hibiscus flowers**, available via mail order from **Nawel Keur Mame Asta Walo Halal Meat & Poultry Grocery** (\$4 for an 8-ounce bag; see ordering information below); and **tamarind paste**, available from Grocery Thai (\$5.50 for a 13.2-ounce block; 818/469-9407; grocerythai.com).

### Kitchen

Go to pierrethiamcatering.com to learn more about chef **Pierre Thiam** and his Senegalese cuisine, and to purchase his cookbook **Yolele!** (Lake Isle Press, 2008). To purchase all the ingredients featured in our Senegalese glossary, including palm oil, dried white hibiscus flowers, khouthia, fresh peanut butter, fonio, dried fermented fish, sea snails, and mollusk beans, call to place a mail order or go to **Nawel Keur Mame Asta Walo Halal Meat & Poultry Grocery** (219 West 116th Street, New York City, New York; 212/222-7900) and **Gold Coast Trading Co. African-American Caribbean Market** (381 Canal Place, Bronx, New York; 718/292-5302; goldcoasttrading.net).



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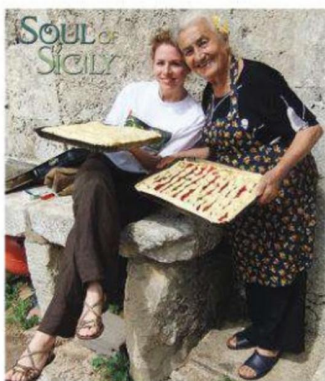


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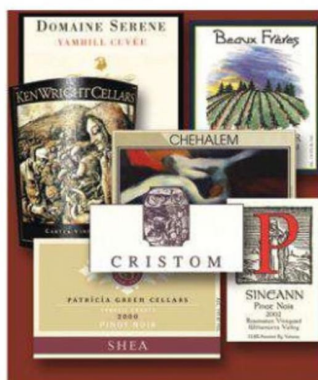


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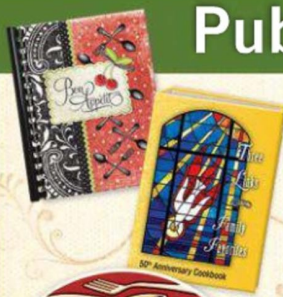
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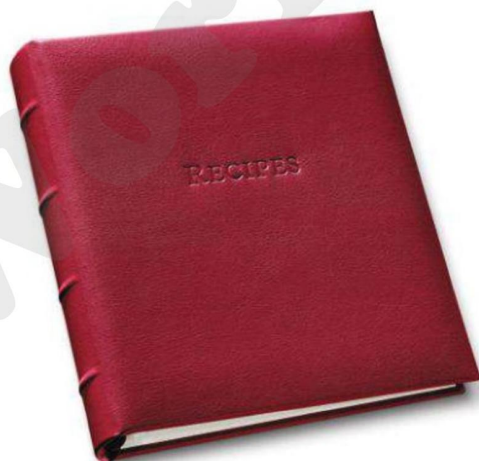


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# M O M E N T

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**TIME** March 13, 1940

**PLACE** Aldershot, England

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*A shipment of meat at a Royal Army Service Corps supply depot gives new meaning to the phrase "enough to feed an army."*

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